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NOTES,
EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL,
ON THE
ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

DESIGNED FOR
BIBLE-CLASSES AND SUNDAY-SCHOOLS.

BY ALBERT [✓]BARNES.

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INTRODUCTION.

THERE is no evidence that the title "The Acts of the Apostles" affixed to this book, was given by divine authority, or by the writer himself. It is a title, however, which, with a little variation, has been given to it by the Christian church at all times. The term "Acts" is not used as it is sometimes with us to denote *decrees* or *laws*, but it denotes the *doings* of the apostles. It is a record of what the apostles *did* in founding and establishing the Christian church. It is worthy of remark, however, that it contains chiefly a record of the *doings* of Peter and Paul. Peter was commissioned to open the doors of the Christian church to both Jews and Gentiles (see Note, Matt. xvi. 18, 19); and Paul was chosen to bear the gospel especially to the pagan world. As these two apostles were the most prominent and distinguished in founding and organizing the Christian church, it was deemed proper that a special and permanent record should be made of their labours. At the same time, occasional notices are given of the other apostles; but of their labours elsewhere than in Judea, and of their death, except that of James (Acts xii. 2), the sacred writers have given no information.

All antiquity is unanimous in ascribing this book to Luke, as its author. It is repeatedly mentioned and quoted by the early Christian writers, and without a dissenting voice is mentioned as the work of Luke. The same thing is clear from the book itself. It professes to have been written by the same person who wrote the Gospel of Luke (ch. i. 1); was addressed to the same person (comp. ver. 1 with Luke i. 3); and bears manifest marks of being from the same pen. It is designed evidently as a continuation of his Gospel, as in this book he has taken up the history at the very time where he left it in the Gospel (ver. 1. 2).

Where, or at what time, this book was written is not certainly known. As the history however, is continued to the second year of the residence of Paul at Rome (Acts xxviii. 31), it was evidently written about as late as the year 62; and as it makes no mention of the further dealings with Paul, or of any other event of history, it seems clear that it was not written much *after* that time. It has been common, therefore, to fix the date of the book at about A. D. 63. It is also probable that it was written at Rome. In ch. xxviii. 16, Luke mentions *his* arrival at Rome with Paul. As he does not mention his departure from this city, it is to be presumed that it was written there. Some have supposed that it was written at Alexandria in Egypt, but of that there is no sufficient evidence.

The canonical authority of this book rests on the same foundation as that of the Gospel by the same author. Its authenticity has not been called in question at any time in the church.

This book has commonly been regarded as a history of the Christian church, and of course the first ecclesiastical history that was written.

But it cannot have been designed as a general history of the church. Many important transactions have been omitted. It gives no account of the church at Jerusalem after the conversion of Paul; it omits his journey into Arabia (Gal. i. 17); gives no account of the propagation of the gospel in Egypt, or in Babylon (1 Pet. v. 13); of the foundation of the church at Rome; of many of Paul's voyages and shipwrecks (2 Cor. xi. 25); and omits to record the labours of most of the apostles, and confines the narrative chiefly to the transactions of Peter and Paul.

The design and importance of this history may be learned from the following particulars:

1. It contains *a record of the promised descent and operations of the Holy Spirit*. The Lord Jesus promised that after he had departed to heaven, he would send the Holy Ghost to carry forward the great work of redemption. John xiv. 16, 17; xv. 26; xvi. 7—14. The apostles were directed to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. Luke xxiv. 49. The four Gospels contained a record of the life, instructions, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. But it is clear that he contemplated that the most signal triumphs of the gospel should take place after his ascension to heaven, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit. The descent of the Spirit, and his influence on the souls of men, was a most important part of the work of redemption. Without an authentic, an inspired record of that, the account of the operations of God the Father, Son, and Spirit, in the work of redemption, would not have been complete. The purposes of *the Father* in regard to that plan were made known clearly in the Old Testament; the record of what *the Son* did in accomplishing it, was contained in the Gospels; and some book was needful that should contain a record of the *doings* of the Holy Spirit. As the Gospels, therefore, may be regarded as a record of the work of Christ to save men, so may the Acts of the Apostles be considered as a record of the doings of the Holy Spirit in the same great work. Without that, the way in which the Spirit operates to renew and save would have been very imperfectly known.

2. This book is *an inspired account of the character of true revivals of religion*. It records the first revivals that occurred in the Christian church. The scene on the day of Pentecost was one of the most remarkable displays of divine power and mercy that the world has ever known. It was the commencement of a series of stupendous movements in the world to recover men. It was the true model of a revival of religion, and a perpetual demonstration that such scenes as have characterized our own age and nation especially, are strictly in accordance with the spirit of the New Testament. The entire book of the Acts of the Apostles records the effect of the gospel when it comes fairly in contact with the minds of men. The gospel was addressed to every class. It met the Jew and the Gentile, the bond and the free, the learned and the ignorant, the rich and the poor; and showed its power every where in subduing the mind to itself. It was proper that some record should be preserved of the displays of that power; and that record we have in this book. And it was especially proper that there should be given by an inspired man an account of the descent of the Holy Spirit, *a record of a true revival of religion*. It was certain that the gospel would produce excitement. The human mind, as all experience shows, is prone to enthusiasm and fanaticism; and men might be disposed to

pervert the gospel to scenes of wild-fire, disorder, and tumult. That the gospel *would* produce excitement, was well known to its Author. It was well therefore that there should be some record to which the church might always appeal as an infallible account of the proper effects of the gospel; some inspired standard to which might be brought all excitements on the subject of religion. If they are in accordance with the first triumphs of the gospel, they are genuine; if not, they are false.

3. It may be further remarked, that this book shows that *revivals of religion are to be expected in the church*. If they existed in the best and purest days of Christianity, they are to be expected now. If by means of revivals the Holy Spirit chose at first to bless the preaching of the truth, the same thing is to be expected still. If in this way the gospel was at first spread among the nations, then we are to infer that this will be the mode in which it will finally spread and triumph in the world.

4. The Acts of the Apostles contains a record of the organization of the Christian church. That church was founded simply by the preaching of the truth, and chiefly by a simple statement of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The "Acts of the Apostles" contains the highest models of preaching, and the purest specimens of that simple, direct, and pungent manner of addressing men, which may be expected to be attended with the influences of the Holy Spirit. It contains some of the most tender, powerful, and eloquent appeals to be found in any language. If a man wishes to learn how to preach well, he can probably acquire it nowhere else so readily as by giving himself to the prayerful and profound study of the specimens contained in this book. At the same time we have here a view of the *character* of the true church of Christ. The *simplicity* of this church must strike every reader of "the Acts." Religion is represented as a work of the heart; the pure and proper effect of *truth* on the mind. It is free from pomp and splendour, and from costly and magnificent ceremonies. There is no apparatus to impress the senses, no splendour or dazzle, no external rite or parade adapted to draw the affections from the pure and spiritual worship of God. How unlike to the pomp and parade of pagan worship! How unlike the vain and pompous ceremonies which have since, alas! crept into no small part of the Christian church!

5. In this book we have many striking and impressive illustrations of what the gospel is fitted to produce, to make men self-denying and benevolent. The apostles engaged in the great enterprise of converting the world. To secure that, they cheerfully forsook all. Paul became a convert to the Christian faith, and cheerfully for that gave up all his hopes of preferment and honour, and welcomed toil and privation in foreign lands. The early converts had all things in common (ch. ii. 44); those "which had curious arts," and were gaining property by a course of iniquity, forsook their schemes of ill-gotten gain, and burned their books publicly (ch. xix. 19); Ananias and Sapphira were punished for attempting to impose on the apostles by hypocritical professed self-denials (ch. v. 1—10); and throughout the book there occur constant instances of sacrifices and toil to spread the gospel around the globe. Indeed, these great truths had manifestly seized upon the early Christians: *that the gospel was to be preached to all nations; and that whatever stood in the way of that was to be sacrificed; whatever toils and dangers were necessary, were to be borne; and even death itself was cheerfully to be met, if it would pro-*

mote the spread of true religion. This was *then* genuine Christianity: this is *still* the spirit of the gospel of Christ.

6. This book throws important light on the *Epistles*. It is a connecting link between the Gospels and the other parts of the New Testament. Instances of this will be noticed in the Notes. One of the most clear and satisfactory evidences of the genuineness of the books of the New Testament is to be found in the *undesigned coincidences* between the Acts and the Epistles. This argument was first clearly stated and illustrated by Dr. Paley. His little work illustrating it, the *Horæ Paulinæ*, is one of the most unanswerable proofs which have yet been furnished of the truth of the Christian religion.

7. This book contains unanswerable evidence of the truth of the Christian religion. It is a record of the early triumphs of Christianity. Within the space of *thirty years* after the death of Christ, the gospel had been carried to all parts of the civilized, and to no small portion of the uncivilized world. Its progress and its triumphs were not concealed. Its great transactions were not "done in a corner." It had been preached in the most splendid, powerful, and corrupt cities; churches were already founded in Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, and at Rome. The gospel had spread in Arabia, Asia Minor, Greece, Macedon, Italy, and Africa. It had assailed the most mighty existing institutions; it had made its way over the most formidable barriers; it had encountered the most deadly and malignant opposition; it had travelled to the capital, and had secured such a hold even in the imperial city, as to make it certain that it would finally overturn the established religion, and seat itself on the ruins of paganism. Within thirty years it had settled the point that it would overturn every bloody altar; close every pagan temple; bring under its influence the men of office, rank, and power; and that "the banners of the faith would soon stream from the palaces of the Cæsars." All this would be accomplished by the instrumentality of Jews—of fishermen—of Nazarenes. They had neither wealth, armies, nor allies. With the exception of Paul, they were men without learning. They were taught only by the Holy Ghost; armed only with the power of God; victorious only because he was their captain; and the world acknowledged the presence of the messengers of the Highest, and the power of the Christian religion. Its success never has been, and never can be accounted for by any other supposition than that God attended it. And if the Christian religion be not true, the change wrought by the twelve apostles is the most inexplicable, mysterious, and wonderful event that has ever been witnessed in this world. Their success to the end of time will stand as an argument of the truth of the scheme, that shall confound the infidel, and sustain the Christian with the assured belief that *this* is a religion which has proceeded from the almighty and infinitely benevolent God.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

CHAPTER I.

THE former treatise ^a have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

^a Lu. i. 1-4, &c. ^b Lu. 24. 51. ver. 9. 1 Ti. 3. 16.

1. *The former treatise.* The former book. The Gospel by Luke is here evidently intended. Greek, 'the former *Logos*,' meaning a *discourse*, or a narrative. ¶ *O Theophilus.* See Note, Luke i. 3. As this book was written to the same individual as the former, it was evidently written with the same design—to furnish an authentic and full narrative of events concerning which there would be many imperfect and exaggerated accounts given. See Luke i. 1-4. As these events pertained to the descent of the Spirit, to the spread of the gospel, to the organization of the church by inspired authority, to the kind of preaching by which the church was collected and organized; and as those events were a full proof of the truth and power of the Christian religion, and would be a model for ministers and the church in all future times, it was of great importance that a fair and full narrative of them should be preserved. Luke was the companion of Paul in his travels, and was an eye-witness of no small part of the transactions recorded in this book. See Acts xvi. 10. 17; xx. 1-6; xxvii. xxviii. As an eye-witness, he was well qualified to make a record of the leading events of the primitive church. And as he was the companion of Paul, he had every opportunity of obtaining information about the great events of the gospel of Christ. ¶ *Of all.* That is, of the principal, or most important parts of the life and doctrines of Christ. It cannot mean that he recorded *all* that Jesus did, as he has omitted many things that have been preserved by the other Evangelists. The word *all* is frequently thus used to denote the most important or material facts. See Acts xiii. 10. 1 Tim. i. 16. James i. 2. Matt. ii. 3; iii. 5. Acts ii. 5. Rom. xi. 26. Col. i. 6. In each of these places the word here translated "*all*" occurs in the original, and means *many, a large part, the principal portion*. It has the same use in all languages. "This word often signifies, indefinitely, a large portion or number, or a

2 Until ^b the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments ^c unto the apostles whom he had chosen :

^c Matt. 28. 19. Mar. 16. 15-19.

great part." Webster. ¶ *That Jesus.* The Syriac version adds, "Jesus our Messiah." This version was probably made in the second century. ¶ *Began to do.* This is a Hebrew form of expression, meaning the same thing as, that Jesus *did* and *taught*. See Gen. ix. 20, "Noah *began* to be a husbandman," i. e. *was* an husbandman. Gen. ii. 3, in the Septuagint: "Which God *began* to create and make;" in the Hebrew, "which God created and made." Mark vi. 7, "*Began* to send them forth by two and two," i. e. *sent* them forth. See also Mark x. 32; xiv. 65, "And some *began* to spit on him;" in the parallel place in Matt. xxvi. 67, "they *did* spit in his face." ¶ *To do.* This refers to his miracles and his acts of benevolence, including all that he *did* for man's salvation. It probably includes, therefore, his sufferings, death, and resurrection, as a part of what he has *done* to save men. ¶ *To teach.* His doctrines. As he had given an account of what the Lord Jesus did, so he was now about to give a narrative of what his apostles did in the same cause, that thus the world might be in possession of an inspired record respecting the redemption and establishment of the Christian church. The history of these events is one of the greatest blessings that God has conferred on mankind; and one of the highest privileges which men can enjoy is that which has been conferred so abundantly on this age in the possession and extension of the word of God.

2. *Until the day.* The fortieth day after his resurrection, ver. 3. See Luke xxiv. 51. ¶ *In which he was taken up.* In which he ascended to heaven. He was taken up into a cloud, and is represented as having been *borne* or carried to heaven, ver. 9. ¶ *After that, &c.* This whole passage has been variously rendered. The Syriac renders it, "After he had given commandment unto the apostles whom he had chosen by the Holy Spirit." So also the Ethiopic version. Others

3 To whom also he showed himself after his passion, by many *infallible proofs*, being seen of them

a Lu. 24. Jno. c. 20. & 21.

have joined the words "through the Holy Ghost" to the phrase "was taken up," making it mean that he was taken up by the Holy Ghost. But the most natural and correct translation seems to be that which is in our version. ¶ *Through the Holy Ghost.* To understand this it is necessary to call to mind the promise that Jesus made before his death, that after his departure, the Holy Ghost would descend to be a guide to his apostles. See John xvi. 7—11, and the Note on that place. It was to be *his* office to carry forward the work of redemption in applying it to the hearts of men. Whatever was done, therefore, *after* the atonement and resurrection of Jesus, *after* he had finished his great work, was to be regarded as under the peculiar influence and direction of the Holy Ghost. Even the instructions of Jesus, his commission to the apostles, &c. were to be regarded as coming within the department of the sacred Spirit, within the province of *his* peculiar work. The instructions were given by divine authority, by infallible guidance, and as a part of the work which the Holy Spirit designed. Under that Spirit the apostles were to go forth; by *his* aid they were to convert the world, to organize the church, to establish its order and its doctrines. And hence the entire work was declared to be by his direction. Though in his larger and more mighty influences, the Spirit did not descend until the day of Pentecost (Luke xxiv. 49. comp. Acts ii.) yet *in some measure* his influence was imparted to them before the ascension of Christ. John xx. 22. ¶ *Had given commandments.* Particularly the command to preach the gospel to all nations. Matt. xxviii. 19. Mark xvi. 15—19. It may be worthy of remark, that the word *commandments*, as a noun in the plural number, does not occur in the original. The single word which is translated "had given commandments" is a *participle*, and means simply *having commanded*. There is no need, therefore, of supposing that there is reference here to any other command than to that great and glorious injunction to preach the gospel to every creature. That was a command of so much importance as to be worthy of a distinct record, as constituting the sum of all that the Saviour taught them after his resurrection. ¶ *The apos-*

forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God;

les. The eleven that remained after the treason and death of Judas. ¶ *Whom he had chosen.* Matt. x. Luke vi. 12—16.

3. *He shewed himself.* The resurrection of Jesus was the great fact on which the truth of the gospel was to be established. Hence the sacred writers so often refer to it, and establish it by so many arguments. As that *truth* lay at the foundation of all that Luke was about to record in his history, it was of importance that he should state clearly the sum of the evidence of it in the beginning of his work. ¶ *After his passion.* After he suffered, referring particularly to his death, as the consummation of his sufferings. The word *passion* with us means commonly excitement, or agitation of mind, as love, hope, fear, anger, &c. In the original the word means to suffer. The word *passion*, applied to the Saviour, denotes his last sufferings. Thus in the Litany of the Episcopal church, it is beautifully said, "by thine agony and bloody sweat; by thy cross and *passion*, good Lord, deliver us." The Greek word of the same derivation is rendered *sufferings* in 1 Pet. i. 11; iv. 13. Col. i. 24. ¶ *By many infallible proofs.* The word rendered here *infallible proofs*, does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. In Greek authors it denotes an infallible sign or argument by which any thing can be certainly known. *Schleusner.* Here it means the same—evidence that he was alive which could not deceive, or in which they could not be mistaken. That evidence consisted in his eating with them, conversing with them, meeting them at various times and places, working miracles (John xxi. 6, 7); and uniformly showing himself to be the same friend with whom they had been familiar for more than three years. This evidence was infallible, (1.) Because it was to them unexpected. They had manifestly not believed that he would rise again. John xx. 25. Luke xxiv. There was therefore no *delusion* resulting from any *expectation* of seeing him, or from a *design* to impose on men. (2.) It was impossible that they could have been *deceived* in relation to one with whom they had been familiar for more than three years. No men could be imposed upon and made to believe that they really saw, talked with, and ate with, a friend whom they had known so

4 And ¹ being assembled together with *them*, commanded ^a them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise

¹ or, *eating together.*

^a Lu. 24. 49.

long and familiarly, unless it was real. (3.) There were *enough* of them to avoid the possibility of deception. Though it might be pretended that *one* man could be imposed on, yet it could not be that an imposition could be practised for forty days on eleven, who were all at first incredulous. (4.) He was with them sufficient *time* to give evidence. It might be pretended, if they had seen him but *once*, that they were deceived. But they saw him often, and for the space of more than a month. (5.) They saw him in *various places* and times where there could be no deception. If they had pretended that they saw him *rise*, or saw him at twilight in the morning *when* he rose, it might have been said that they were deluded by some remarkable appearance. Or it might have been said that, *expecting* to see him rise, their hopes and agitations would have deceived them, and they would easily have *fancied* that they saw him. But it is not pretended by the sacred writers that *they saw him rise*. An impostor would have affirmed this, and *would not have omitted it*. But the sacred writers affirmed that they saw him *after* he was risen; when they were free from agitation; when they could judge coolly; in Jerusalem; in their company when at worship; when journeying to Emmaus; when in Galilee; when he went with them to mount Olivet; and when he ascended to heaven. (5.) He appeared to them as he had always done; as a friend, companion, and benefactor: he ate with them; wrought a miracle before them; was engaged in the same work as he was before he suffered; renewed the same promise of the Holy Spirit; and gave them his commands respecting the work which he had died to establish and promote. In all these circumstances it was impossible that they should be deceived. ¶ *Being seen of them forty days.* There are no less than THIRTEEN different appearances of Jesus to his disciples recorded. For an account of them see the Note at the end of the Gospel of Matthew. ¶ *Speaking to them, &c.* He was not only *seen* by them, but he *continued the same topics of discourse* as before his sufferings; thus showing that he was the *same* person that had suffered, and that his heart was still intent on the same great

of the Father, which, *saith he*, Ye ^b have heard of me:

5 For John ^c truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with

^b Jno. c. 14, 15, & 16.

^c Matt. 3. 17.

work. Our Saviour's heart was filled with the same design in his life and death, and when he rose; thus showing us that we should aim at the same great work in all the circumstances of our being. Afflictions, persecutions, and death never turned *him* from this great plan; nor should they be allowed to divert *our* minds from the great work of redemption. ¶ *The things pertaining to the kingdom of God.* For an explanation of this phrase, *the kingdom of God*, see the Note on Matt. iii. 2. The meaning is, Jesus gave them instructions about the organization, spread, and edification of his church.

4. *And being assembled together.* Margin, "or, *eating together.*" This sense is given to this place in the Latin Vulgate, the Ethiopic, and the Syriac versions. But the Greek word has not properly this sense. It has the meaning of *congregating, or assembling*. It should have been, however, translated in the *active* sense, "and *having assembled* them together." The apostles were scattered after his death. But this passage denotes that he had assembled them together by his authority, for the purpose of giving them a charge respecting their conduct when he should have left them. *When* this occurred, does not appear from the narrative; but it is probable that it was not long before his ascension: and it is clear that the *place* where they were assembled was *Jerusalem*. ¶ *But wait for the promise of the Father.* For the *fulfilment* of the promise respecting the descent of the Holy Spirit, made by the Father. ¶ *Which ye have heard of me.* Which I have made to you. See John xiv. 16. 26; xv. 26; xvi. 7—13.

5. *For John truly baptized, &c.* These are the words of Jesus to his apostles, and he evidently has reference to what was said of John's baptism compared with his own in Matt. iii. 11. John i. 33. In those verses John is represented as baptizing with water, but the Messiah who was to come as baptizing with the Holy Ghost and with fire. This promise respecting the Messiah was now about to be fulfilled in a remarkable manner. See Acts ii. ¶ *Not many days hence.* This was probably spoken not long before his ascension, and of course not many days before the day of Pentecost.

the Holy Ghost, ^a not many days hence.

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt ^b thou at this time re-

^a c.2.4; 10.45; 11.15.

^b Matt.24.3,4.

store ^c again the kingdom to Israel?

7 And he said unto them, It ^d is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power.

^c Is.1.26. Da.7.27.

^d Matt.24.36. 1Th.5.1,2.

6. *When they therefore were come together.* At the mount of Olives. See ver. 9. 12. ¶ *Wilt thou at this time, &c.* The apostles had entertained the common opinions of the Jews about the *temporal* dominion of the Messiah. They expected that he would reign as a prince and conqueror, and free them from the bondage of the Romans. Many instances of this expectation occur in the Gospels, notwithstanding all the efforts which the Lord Jesus made to explain to them the true nature of his kingdom. This expectation was checked, and almost destroyed by his death. Luke xxiv. 21. And it is clear that *his death* was the only means which could effectually check and change their opinions respecting the nature of his kingdom. Even his own instructions would not do it; and only his being taken from them could direct their minds effectually to the true nature of his kingdom. Yet, though his death checked their expectations, and appeared to thwart their plans, yet his return to life excited them again. They beheld him with them; they were assured it was the same Saviour; they saw now that his enemies had no power over him; that a being who could rise from the dead, could easily accomplish all his plans. And as they did not doubt now that he *would* restore the kingdom to Israel, they asked whether he would do it *at this time*? They did not ask whether he would do it at all, or whether they had correct views of his kingdom; but taking that for granted, they asked him whether *that was the time* in which he would do it. The emphasis of the inquiry lies in the expression, "*at this time,*" and hence the answer of the Saviour refers solely *to the point of their inquiry*, and not to the correctness or incorrectness of their opinions. From these expectations of the apostles we may learn, 1. That there is nothing so difficult to be removed from the mind as *prejudice in favour of erroneous opinions*. 2. That such prejudice will survive the plainest proofs to the contrary. 3. That it will often manifest itself even after all proper means have been taken to subdue it. Erroneous opinions thus maintain a secret ascendancy

in a man's mind, and are revived by the slightest circumstances, even long after we supposed they were overcome; and even in the face of the plainest proofs of reason or of Scripture. ¶ *Restore. Bring back;* put into its former situation. Judea was formerly governed by its own kings and laws; now, it was subject to the Romans. This bondage was grievous, and the nation sighed for deliverance. The inquiry of the apostles evidently was, whether he would now free them from the bondage of the Romans, and restore them to their former state of freedom and prosperity, as in the times of David and Solomon. See Isa. i. 26. The word "restore" also may include more than a reducing it to its former state. It may mean, wilt thou now *bestow* the kingdom and dominion to Israel, according to the prediction in Dan. vii. 27. ¶ *The kingdom.* The dominion; the empire; the reign. The expectation was that the Messiah—the king of Israel—would *reign* over men, and thus the nation of the Jews extend their empire over all the earth. ¶ *To Israel.* To the Jews, and particularly to the *Jewish* followers of the Messiah. Lightfoot thinks that this question was asked in indignation against the Jews. "Wilt thou confer dominion on a nation which has just put thee to death?" But the answer of the Saviour shows that this was not the design of the question.

7. *It is not for you to know.* The question of the apostles respected the *time* of the restoration; it was not whether he *would* do it. Accordingly his answer meets precisely their inquiry; and he tells them *in general* that the *time* of the great events of God's kingdom was not to be understood by them. A similar question they had asked in Matt. xxiv. 3, "Tell us when shall these things be?" Jesus answered them *then* by showing them certain signs which should precede his coming, and by saying (ver. 36), "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." God has uniformly reproved a vain curiosity on such points. 1 Thess. v. 1, 2. 2 Pet. iii. 10. Luke xii. 39, 40. ¶ *The times, or the seasons.* The difference between these words is, that the former de-

8 But ye shall receive¹ power, after that the Holy Ghost is come

¹ or, the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you.

notes any time or period indefinite, or uncertain; the latter denotes a fixed, definite, or appropriate time. They seem to be used here to denote the periods of all classes of future events. ¶ *The Father hath put, &c.* So much had the Father reserved the knowledge of these, that it is said that even the Son did not know them. See Mark xiii. 32; and the Note on that place. ¶ *In his own power.* That is, he has fixed them by his own authority; he will bring them about in his own time and way; and therefore it is not proper for men anxiously to inquire into them. All prophecy is remarkably *obscure* in regard to the *time* of its fulfilment. The reasons are, (1.) To excite men to watch for the events that are to come, as the time is uncertain, and they will come "like a thief in the night." (2.) As they are to be brought about by human agency, they are so arranged as to call forth that agency. If men knew *just when* an event was to come to pass, they might be remiss, and feel that their effort was not needed. (3.) The knowledge of future scenes—of the exact *time*, might alarm men, and absorb their thoughts entirely, and prevent attendance to the present duties of life. Duty is ours now; God will provide for future scenes. (4.) Promises sufficiently clear and full are therefore given us to encourage us; but not full enough to excite a vain and idle curiosity. All this is eminently true of our own death, one of the most important future scenes through which *we* are to pass. It is *certainly* before us; it is *near*; it *cannot* be long avoided; it *may come* at any moment. God has fixed the time, but will not inform us when it shall be. He does not gratify a vain curiosity, or terrify us, by announcing to us the day or the hour when we are to die, as we do a man that is to be executed. This would be to make our lives like that of a criminal sentenced to die, and we should through all our life through fear of death be subject to bondage. Heb. ii. 15. He has made *enough* known to excite us to prepare, and to be always ready, having our loins girt about, and our lamps trimmed and burning. Luke xii. 35.

8. *But ye shall receive power, &c.* Literally, as it is translated in the margin, "ye shall receive the power of the Holy

upon you: and ye^a shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria,

a Lu. 24. 47–49. Mat. 28. 19.

Ghost coming upon you." This was said to them to console them. Though they could not know the *times* which God reserved in his own appointment, yet they should receive the promised guide and comforter. The word *power* here refers to all the help or aid which the Holy Spirit would grant; the power of speaking with new tongues; of preaching the gospel with great effect; of enduring great trials, &c. See Mark xvi. 17, 18. The apostles had *impatiently* asked him if he was *then* about to restore the kingdom to Israel. Jesus by this answer rebuked their impatience; taught them to repress their ill-timed ardour; and assured them again of the coming of the Holy Ghost. ¶ *Ye shall be witnesses.* For this purpose they were appointed; and for this design they had been with him for more than three years. They had seen his manner of life, his miracles, his meekness, his sufferings; they had listened to his instructions, had conversed and eaten with him as a friend; they had seen him after he was risen, and were about to see him ascend to heaven; and they were *qualified* to bear witness to all these things in all parts of the earth. They were so numerous, that it could not be pretended that they were deceived; they had been so intimate with him and his plans, that they could testify of him; and there was no motive but conviction of the truth, that could lead them to all these sacrifices in making known the Saviour. The original word here is *μαρτυρες*, *martyrs*. From this word the name *martyrs* has been given to those who suffered in times of persecution. The reason why this name was given to them was that they *bore witness* to the life, instructions, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, even in the midst of persecution and death. It is commonly supposed that nearly all of the apostles thus bore witness to the Lord Jesus: of this, however, there is not clear proof. See Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, vol. i. p. 55, 56. Still the word here does not necessarily mean that they should be *martyrs*, or be put to death in bearing witness to the Lord Jesus; but that they should every where testify to what they knew of him. The fact that this was the design of their appointment, and that they actually bore such testimony, is abundantly confirmed in the

and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

9 And when he had spoken these

Acts of the Apostles, ch. i. 2; v. 32; x. 39. 42; xxii. 15. ¶ *In Jerusalem.* In the capital of the nation. See Acts ii. The great work of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost occurred there. Most of the disciples remained in Jerusalem until the persecution that arose about the death of Stephen. Acts viii. 1. 4. The apostles remained there till Herod put James to death. Comp. Acts viii. 1, with xii. 1. This was about eight years. During this time, however, Paul was called to the apostleship, and Peter had preached the gospel to Cornelius, Philip to the eunuch, &c. ¶ *In all Judea.* Judea was the southern division of the Holy Land, and included Jerusalem as the capital. See Note, Matt. i. 22. See ch. viii. 1. ¶ *And in Samaria.* This was the *middle* portion of Palestine. Note, Matt. i. 22. This was fulfilled by the disciples. See ch. viii. 1, "And they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria (ver. 4), every where preaching the word." viii. 5, "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them." ver. 14; ix. 31. ¶ *And unto the uttermost parts of the earth.* The word *earth*, or *land*, is sometimes taken to denote only the land of Palestine. But here, there does not seem to be a necessity for limiting it thus. If Christ had intended that, he would have mentioned *Galilee*, as being the only remaining division. But as he had expressly directed them to preach the gospel to all nations, the expression here is clearly to be considered as including the Gentile lands as well as the Jewish. The evidence that they did this, is found in the subsequent parts of this book, and in the history of the church. In this way Jesus replied to their question. Though he did not tell them the *time* when it was to be done, nor did he affirm that he would restore the kingdom to *Israel*, yet he gave them an answer that *implied* that the work should advance—should advance much farther than the land of Israel; and that *they* would have *much to do* in promoting it. All the commands of God, and all his communications are such as to call up *our* energy, and teach us that *we* have much to do. The uttermost parts of the earth have been given to the Saviour (Ps. ii. 8); and churches should not rest until he whose right it is shall come and reign. Ezek. xxi. 27.

things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

9. *While they beheld.* While they saw him. It was of importance to state that circumstance, and to state it distinctly. It is not affirmed in the New Testament that they *saw him rise* from the dead; because the evidence of that fact could be better established by their seeing him *after* he was risen. But the truth of his *ascension to heaven* could not be confirmed in that manner. Hence it was so arranged as that he should ascend in open day; in the presence of his apostles; and that not when they were asleep, or indifferent, but when they were engaged in a conversation that should fix the attention, and when they were looking upon him. Had Jesus vanished secretly, or in the night, the apostles would have been amazed and confounded; perhaps they would even have doubted whether they had not been deceived. But when they *saw* him leave them in this manner, they could not doubt that he had risen; and when they saw him ascend to *heaven*, they could not doubt that his work was approved, and that God would carry it onward. This event was exceedingly important. (1.) It was a confirmation of the truth of the Christian religion. (2.) It enabled the apostles to state distinctly *where* the Lord Jesus was, and *at once* directed their affections and their thoughts away from the earth, and opened their eyes on the glory of the scheme of religion they were to establish. If their Saviour was *in heaven*, it settled the question about the *nature* of his kingdom. It was clear that it was not designed to be a temporal kingdom. The *reasons* why it was proper that the Lord Jesus should ascend to heaven rather than remain on earth, were, (1.) That he had *finished* the work which God gave him to do *on the earth* (John xvii. 4; xix. 30), and it was *proper* that he should be received back to the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. John xvii. 4, 5. Phil. ii. 6. 9, 10. (2.) It was proper that *he* should ascend, that the Holy Spirit might come down and perform *his* part of the work of redemption. Jesus, by his *personal* ministry, as a man, could be but in one place; the Holy Spirit could be in all places, and be present at all times, and could apply the work to all men. Note, John xvi. 7. (3.) A *part* of the work of Christ was yet to be performed in heaven. That was the work of *intercession*. The high-priest of the Jews not only made

10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold, two^a men stood by them in white apparel;

a Jno. 20. 12.

an *atonement*, but also presented the blood of sacrifice before the mercy-seat, as the priest of the people. Lev. xvi. 11—14. This was done to typify the entrance of the great High-priest of our profession into the heavens. Heb. ix. 7, 8, 11, 12. The work which he performs there is the work of *intercession*. Heb. vii. 25. This is properly the work which an advocate performs in a court of justice for his client. It means that Christ, our great High-priest, still pleads and manages our cause in heaven; secures our interests; obtains for us grace and mercy. It consists in his appearing in the presence of God for us (Heb. ix. 24); in his presenting the merits of his blood (Heb. x. 12, 14); and in securing the continuance of the mercy which has been bestowed on us, and which is still needful for our welfare. The Lord Jesus also ascended that he might assume and exercise the office of *King* in the immediate seat of power. All worlds were subject to him for the welfare of the church; and it was needful that he should be solemnly invested with that power in the presence of God, as the reward of his earthly toils. 1 Cor. xv. 25. "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." Eph. i. 20—22. Phil. ii. 6—11. ¶ *A cloud received him.* He entered into the region of the clouds, and was hid from their view. But two others of our race have been taken bodily from earth to heaven. Enoch was translated (Gen. v. 24. Comp. Heb. xi. 5); and Elijah was taken by a whirlwind to heaven. 2 Kings ii. 11. It is remarkable that when the *return* of the Saviour is mentioned, it is uniformly said that he will return *in the clouds*. ver. 11. Matt. xxiv. 30; xxvi. 64. Mark xiii. 26. Rev. i. 7. Dan. vii. 13. The clouds are an emblem of sublimity and grandeur, and perhaps this is all that is intended by these expressions. Deut. iv. 11. 2 Sam. xxii. 12. Ps. xcvi. 2; civ. 3.

10. *Looked steadfastly.* They fixed their eyes, or gazed intently toward heaven. Luke iv. 20, "And the eyes of all them in the synagogue were fastened (Greek, the same word as here) on him." It means the intense gaze when we are deeply interested, and wish to see clearly and distinctly. Here they were amazed and

B

11 Which also said, Ye men^b of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into

b c. 2. 7; 13. 31.

confounded; the thing was unlooked-for; and they were even *then* inquiring whether he would not restore the kingdom to Israel. With this mingled amazement, and disappointment, and curiosity; and with the earnest desire to catch the last glimpse of their beloved master, they naturally continued to gaze on the distant clouds where he had mysteriously disappeared from their view. Never was a scene more impressive, grand, and solemn than this. ¶ *Toward heaven.* Toward the distant clouds or sky which had received him. ¶ *As he went up.* Literally, "The ascending, or going up." Doubtless they continued to gaze after he had departed from their view. ¶ *Two men.* From the *raiment* of these "men" and the nature of their message, it seems clear that they were angelic beings, who were sent to meet and comfort the disciples on this occasion. They appeared in *human form*, and Luke describes them as they appeared. Angels are not unfrequently called *men*. Luke xxiv. 4, "Two men stood by them in shining garments," &c. Comp. John xxi. 12. Matt. xxviii. 5. As *two* angels are mentioned only as addressing the apostles after the resurrection of Jesus (John xx. 12. Luke xxiv. 4), it is no unnatural supposition that these were the same who had been designated to the honourable office of bearing witness to his resurrection, and of giving them all the information about that resurrection, and of his ascension, which their circumstances needed, ¶ *In white apparel.* Angels are commonly represented as clothed in white. Note, John xx. 12. Matt. xxviii. 3. Mark xvi. 5. It is an emblem of purity; and the worshippers of heaven are represented as clothed in this manner. Rev. iii. 4, "They shall walk with me in white." 5, "He that overcometh shall be clothed in white raiment." iv. 4; vii. 9, 13, 14.

11. *Ye men of Galilee.* Galilee was the place of their former residence; and this was the name by which they were commonly known. There is no evidence that the angel intended this name in any way to reproach them. ¶ *Why stand ye, &c.* There is doubtless a *slight* degree of censure implied in this, as well as a design to call their attention away from a vain attempt to see the departed Sa-

heaven, shall ^a so come in like man-

^a Jno. 14. 3. 1 Th. 4. 16.

viour. The impropriety *may* have been, (1.) In the feeling of disappointment, as if he would *not* restore the kingdom to Israel. (2.) Possibly they were expecting that he would again *soon* appear; though he had often foretold them that he would ascend to heaven. (3.) There might have been an impropriety in their earnest desire for the mere *bodily presence* of the Lord Jesus, when it was more important that it should be in heaven. We may see here also that it is our duty not to stand in idleness, and to gaze *even* towards heaven. We, as well as the apostles, have a great work to do, and we should actively engage in it without delay. ¶ *Gazing up.* Looking up. ¶ *This same Jesus.* This was said to comfort them. The *same* tried friend, who had been so faithful to them, would return. They ought not therefore to look with despondency at his departure. ¶ *Into heaven.* This expression denotes into the immediate presence of God; or into the place of perpetual purity and happiness, where God peculiarly manifests his favour. The same thing is frequently designated by his sitting on the right hand of God, as emblematic of power, honour, and favour. Note, Mark xvi. 19; xiv. 62. Heb. i. 3; viii. 1. Acts vii. 55. Rom. viii. 34. Eph. i. 20. ¶ *Shall so come.* At the day of judgment. John xiv. 3, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again," &c. ¶ *In like manner, &c.* In clouds, as he ascended. See Note, ver. 9. 1 Thess. iv. 16. This address was designed to comfort the disciples. Though their master and friend was taken from them, yet he was not removed for ever. He would come again with similar majesty and glory, for the vindication of his people, and to tread all his enemies under his feet. The *design* for which he will come, will be to judge the world. Matt. xxv. There will be an evident fitness and propriety in his coming. (1.) Because his appropriate work in heaven as mediator shall be accomplished; his people shall have been saved; the enemy subdued; death shall have been conquered; and the gospel shall have shown its power in subduing *all forms* of wickedness; in removing the effects of sin; in establishing the law; in vindicating the honour of God; and shall thus have done all that will be needful to be done to establish the authority of God throughout the universe. It will be proper, there-

ner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

fore, that this mysterious order of things shall be *wound up*, and the *results* become a matter of record in the history of the universe. It will be better than it would be to suffer an *eternal millennium* on the earth, while the saints should many of them slumber, and the wicked still be in their graves. (2.) It is proper that he should come to vindicate his people, and raise them up to glory. Here they have been persecuted, oppressed, put to death. Their character is assailed; they are poor; and the world despises them. It is fit that God should show himself to be their friend; that he should do justice to their injured names and motives; that he should bring out hidden and obscure virtue, and vindicate it; that he should enter every grave and bring forth his friends to life. (3.) It is proper that he should show his hatred of sin. Here it triumphs. The wicked are rich, and honoured, and mighty; and say, Where is the promise of his coming? 2 Pet. iii. 4. It is right that he should defend his cause. Hence the Lord Jesus will come to guard the avenues to heaven, and to see that *the universe suffers no wrong*, by the admission of an improper person to the skies. (4.) The great transactions of redemption have been public, open, often grand. The apostacy was public, in the face of angels and of the universe. Sin has been open, public, high-handed. Misery has been public, and has rolled its deep and turbid waves in the face of the universe. Death has been public; all worlds have seen the race cut down and moulder. The death of Jesus was public; the angels saw it; the heavens were clothed with mourning; the earth shook; and the dead arose. The angels have desired to look into these things (1 Pet. i. 12), and have felt an intense solicitude about men. Jesus was publicly whipped, cursed, crucified; and it is proper that he should publicly triumph, that all heaven rejoicing, and all hell at length humbled, should see his public victory. Hence he will come with clouds—with angels—with fire—and will raise the dead, and exhibit to all the universe the amazing close of the scheme of redemption. (5.) We are in these verses presented with the most grand and wonderful events that this world has ever known—the ascension and return of the Lord Jesus. Here is consolation for the Christian; and

12 Then ^a returned they unto Jerusalem, from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath-day's journey.

13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, ^b and

^a Lu. 24. 52.

^b Lu. 6. 13-16.

here is a source of ceaseless alarm to the sinner.

12. *Then they returned to Jerusalem.* In Luke xxiv. 52, we are told that they worshipped Jesus before they returned. And it is probable that the act of worship to which he refers, was that which is mentioned in this chapter—their gazing intently on their departing Lord. ¶ *From the mount called Olivet.* From the mount of Olives. Note, Matt. xxi. 1. The part of the mountain from which he ascended was the eastern declivity, where stood the little village of Bethany. Luke xxiv. 50. ¶ *A sabbath-day's journey.* As far as might be lawfully travelled by a Jew on the Sabbath. This was two thousand paces or cubits; or seven furlongs and a half—not quite one mile. Note, Matt. xxiv. 20. The distance of a lawful journey on the Sabbath was not determined by the laws of Moses, but the Jewish teachers had fixed it at two thousand paces. This measure was determined on because it was a tradition, that in the camp of the Israelites when coming from Egypt, no part of the camp was more than two thousand paces from the tabernacle; and over this space, therefore, they were permitted to travel for worship. Perhaps, also, some countenance was given to this from the fact that this was the extent of the suburbs of the Levitical cities. Num. xxxv. 5. Mount Olivet was but five furlongs from Jerusalem, and Bethany was fifteen furlongs. But on the eastern declivity of the mountain the tract of country was called, for a considerable space, the region of Bethany; and it was from this place that the Lord Jesus ascended.

13. *Were come in. To Jerusalem.* ¶ *They went up into an upper room.* The word *υπερωρον*, here translated *upper room*, occurs but four times in the New Testament. Acts ix. 37, "She (Dorcas) was sick and died; whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber." 39; xx. 8, "And there were many lights in the upper chamber where they were gathered together." The room so designated was an upper chamber used for

James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James, the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication,

devotion; or to place the dead before burial; or occasionally for conversation, &c. Here it evidently means the place where they were assembled for devotion. Luke (xxiv. 53) says they were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. And some have supposed that the upper room here designated, was one of the rooms in the temple. But there is no evidence of that; and it is not very probable. Such a room was a part of every house, especially in Jerusalem; and they probably selected one where they might be together, and yet so retired that they might be safe from the Jews. ¶ *Where abode.* Where were remaining. This does not mean that this was their permanent habitation; but they remained there waiting for the descent of the Holy Spirit. ¶ *Peter, &c.* All the apostles were there which Jesus had at first chosen, except Judas. Luke vi. 13-16.

14. *These all continued, &c.* The word *continued* denotes persevering and constant attention. The main business was devotion. Acts vi. 4, "We will give ourselves continually to the ministry of the word." Rom. xii. 12, "Continuing instant in prayer." xiii. 6, "Attending continually upon this very thing." It is their *main* and *constant* employment. Col. iv. 2. ¶ *With one accord.* With one mind; unitedly; unanimously. There were no schisms, no divided interests, no discordant purposes. This is a beautiful picture of devotion, and a specimen of what social worship ought now to be, and a beautiful illustration of Ps. cxxxiii. The apostles felt that they had *one* great object; and their deep grief at the loss of their master, their doubts and perplexities, led them, as all afflictions ought to lead us, to the throne of grace. ¶ *In prayer and supplication.* These words are nearly synonymous, and are often interchanged. They express here petitions to God for blessings, and prayer to avert impending evils. ¶ *With the women.* The women that had followed the Lord Jesus from Galilee. Luke viii. 2, 3; xiii. 49, 55; xxiv. 10. Matt. xxvii. 55. The women particularly mentioned are Mary Magdalene,

with the * women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of the names to-

a Lu. 23. 49, 55; 24. 10.

Mary the mother of James and Joses, the mother of Zebedee's children, Joanna the wife of Chuza, and Susanna. Besides these, there were others whose names are not mentioned. Most of them were relatives of the apostles or of our Saviour; and it is not improbable that some of them were wives of the apostles. Peter is known to have been married (Matt. viii. 14), and had his wife in attendance (1 Cor. ix. 5); and the same was doubtless true of some of the other apostles (1 Cor. ix. 5). Mary is here particularly mentioned, the mother of Jesus; showing that she now cast in her lot with the apostles. She had besides been particularly intrusted to the care of John (John xix. 26, 27), and had no other home. This is the last time she is mentioned in the New Testament. John xix. 27. ¶ *And with his brethren.* See Note, Matt. xii. 46. At first they had been unbelieving about the claims of Jesus (John vii. 5); but it seems that they had been subsequently converted.

15. *In those days.* On one of the days intervening between the ascension of Jesus and the day of Pentecost. ¶ *Peter stood up.* Peter *standing up*, or rising. This is a customary expression in the Scriptures when one begins to do a thing. Luke xv. 18. The reason why Peter did this may be seen in the Note on Matt. xvi. 16, 17. It is not improbable, besides, that Peter was the most aged of the apostles; and from his uniform conduct we know that he was the most ardent. It was perfectly characteristic, therefore, for him to introduce the business of the election of a new apostle. ¶ *The disciples.* This was the name which was given to them as being learners in the school of Christ. Note, Matt. v. 1. ¶ *The number of the names.* The number of the persons, or individuals. The word *name* is often used to denote the person. Rev. iii. 4. Acts iv. 12; xviii. 15. Eph. i. 21. In Syriac it is, "the assembly of men was about an hundred and twenty." This was the first assembly convened to transact the business of the church; and it is not a little remarkable that the vote in so important a matter as electing an apostle, was by the

gether were about an hundred and twenty,)

16 Men and brethren: This scripture must needs have been fulfilled which^b the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning

b Ps. 41. 9. Jno. 13. 18.

entire church. It settles the question that the election of a minister and pastor should be by the church, and not be imposed on them by any right of presentation by individuals, or by any ecclesiastical body. If a case could ever occur where a minister should be chosen by the ministry only, such a case was here in the election of another apostle. And yet in this the entire church had a voice. Whether this was *all* the true church at this time, does not appear from the history. This expression cannot mean that there were no more Christians, but that these were all that had convened in the upper room. It is almost certain that our Saviour had, by his own ministry, brought many others to be his true followers.

16. *Men and brethren.* This is a customary mode of address, implying affection and respect. Acts xiii. 26. The Syriac has it more appropriately than by the introduction of the conjunction "and"—"Men, our brethren." ¶ *This scripture.* This portion or prediction contained in the writings of the Old Testament. *Scripture*, writing. Note, John v. 39. The passage to which Peter refers is commonly supposed to be that recorded in Ps. xli. 9 "Yea, mine own familiar friend . . . hath lifted up his heel against me." This is expressly applied to Judas by our Saviour, in John xiii. 18. But it seems clear that the reference is not to the 41st Psalm, but to the passage which Peter proceeds to quote in ver. 20. ¶ *Must needs be fulfilled.* It would certainly happen that it would be fulfilled. Not that there was any physical necessity, or any compulsion; but it could not but occur that a prediction of God should be fulfilled. This makes no affirmation about the freedom of Judas in doing it. A man will be just as free in wickedness if it be foretold that he will be wicked, as if it had never been known to any other being. ¶ *The Holy Ghost, &c.* This is a strong attestation to the inspiration of David, and accords with the uniform testimony of the New Testament, that the sacred writers spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. 2 Pet. i. 21. ¶ *Concerning Judas.* In what respect this was concern.

Judas, which was guide ^a to them that took Jesus.

17 For he ^b was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

18 Now ^c this man purchased a field with the reward ^d of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asun-

^a Matt. 26. 47. Jno. 18. 3.

^b Lu. 6. 16.

ing Judas, see ver. 20. ¶ *Which was guide, &c.* Matt. xxvi. 47. John xviii. 3.

17. *He was numbered with us.* He was chosen as an apostle by the Lord Jesus. Luke vi. 13—16. This does not mean that he was a true Christian, but that he was reckoned among the apostles. Jesus knew that he never loved him. Long before he betrayed him, he declared that he was a devil. John vi. 70. He knew his whole character when he chose him. John ii. 25. If it be asked why he chose *such* a man to be an apostle; why he was made the *treasurer* of the apostles, and was admitted to the fullest confidence; we may reply, that a most important object was gained in having such a man—a *spy*—among them. It might be pretended when the apostles bore testimony to the purity of life, of doctrine, and of purpose, of the Lord Jesus, that they were interested and partial friends; that they might be disposed to *suppress* some of his real sentiments, and represent him in a light more favourable than the truth. Hence the testimony of such a man as Judas, if favourable, must be invaluable. It would be free from the charge of partiality. If Judas *knew* any thing unfavourable to the character of Jesus, he would have communicated it to the Sanhedrim. If he knew of any secret plot against the government, or seditious purpose, he had every inducement to declare it. He had every opportunity to know it: he was with him; heard him converse; was a member of his family, and admitted to terms of familiarity. Yet even *Judas* could not be *bought*, or *brided*, to testify against the moral character of the Saviour. If he *had* done it, or *could* have done it, it would have preserved him from the charge of treason; entitled him to the reputation of a public benefactor in discovering secret sedition; and have saved him from the pangs of remorse, and from self-murder. Judas *would* have done it if he could. But he alleged no such charge; he did not even dare to lisp a word against the pure designs of the Lord Jesus; and his own pangs and death are

der in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; inso-much as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

20 For it is written in the book

^c Matt. 27. 5—10.

^d 2 Pet. 2. 15.

the highest proof that can be desired of his conviction that the betrayed Redeemer was innocent. Judas would have been just the witness which the Jews desired of the treasonable purposes of Jesus. But *that* could not be had, even by gold; and they were compelled to *suborn* other men to testify against the Son of God. Matt. xxvi. 60. We may just add here, that the introduction of such a character as that of Judas Iscariot into the number of the apostles, and the *use* to be made of his testimony, would never have occurred to an impostor. An impostor would have said that they were *all* the true friends of the Lord Jesus. To have *invented* such a character as that of Judas, and to make him perform such a part in the plan as the sacred writers do, would have required too much art and cunning, was too refined and subtle a device to have been thought of, unless it had actually occurred.

18. *Now this man, &c.* The money which was given for betraying the Lord Jesus was thrown down in the temple, and the field was purchased with it by the Jewish priests. See Matt. xxvii. 5, 10, and the Notes on that place. A man is said often to do a thing, when he furnishes *means* for doing it. ¶ *The reward of iniquity.* The price which he had for that deed of stupendous wickedness—the betraying of the Lord Jesus. ¶ *And falling headlong.* He first hanged himself, and then fell and was burst asunder. Matt. xxvii. 5.

19. *It was known, &c.* Matt. xxvii. 8. The scene in the temple; the acts of the priests in purchasing the field, &c. would make it known; and the *name* of the field would preserve the memory of the guilt of Judas. ¶ *Their proper tongue.* The language spoken by the Jews—the *Syro-chaldaic*. ¶ *Aceldama.* This is composed of two Syro-chaldaic words, and means literally, The field of blood.

20. *For it is written, &c.* See Ps. lxi. 25. This is the prediction doubtless to which Peter refers in ver. 16.—The intermediate passage in ver. 18, 19, is probably a parenthesis; the words of Luke, not of

of Psalms, Let ^a his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell

^a Ps. 69.25.

Peter. It is not probable that Peter would introduce a narrative like this, with which they were all familiar, in an address to the disciples. The Hebrew in the Psalm is, "Let their habitation (Heb. *fold, enclosure for cattle; tower, or palace*), be desolate, and let none dwell in their tents."—This quotation is not made literally from the Hebrew, nor from the Septuagint. The *plural* is changed to the *singular*, and there are some other slight variations. The Hebrew says, "let no men dwell in their tents." The reference to the *tents* is omitted in the quotation. The term *habitation*, in the Psalm, means evidently the dwelling place of the enemies of the writer of the Psalm. It is an image expressive of their overthrow and defeat by a just God, 'let their families be scattered, and the places where they have dwelt be without an inhabitant, as a reward for their crimes.' If the Psalm was originally composed with reference to the Messiah and his sufferings, the expression here was not intended to denote Judas in particular, but *one* of his foes, who was to meet the just punishment of rejecting, and betraying, and murdering him. The change, therefore, which Peter made from the plural to the singular; and the application to Judas especially, as *one of those enemies*, accords with the design of the Psalm, and is such a change as the circumstances of the case justified and required. It is an image, therefore, expressive of judgment and desolation coming upon his betrayer—an image to be literally fulfilled in relation to his habitation, drawn from the desolation when a man is discomfited, overthrown, and his dwelling place given up to desolation. It is not a little remarkable that this Psalm is repeatedly quoted as referring to the Messiah. Ver. 9, "The zeal of their house hath eaten me up," expressly applied to Christ in John ii. 17. ver. 21. "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." The thing which was done to Jesus on the cross. Matt. xxvii. 34. The whole Psalm is expressive of deep sorrow—of persecution, contempt, weeping, being forsaken, and is throughout applicable to the Messiah; with what is remarkable, not a single expression to be, of necessity, limited to David. It is not easy to ascertain whether the ancient Jews referred this Psalm to the Messiah. A part of

therein: and, ^b His bishopric ¹ let another take.

^b Ps. 109.8.

¹ or, office, or, charge.

the title to the Psalm in the *Syriac* version is, "It is called a prophecy concerning those things which Christ suffered, and concerning the casting away of the Jews." The prophecy in ver. 25 is not to be understood of Judas alone, but of the enemies of the Messiah in general, of which Judas was one. On this principle the application to Judas of the passage by Peter is to be defended. ¶ And his bishopric let another take. This is quoted from Ps. cix. 8; "Let his days be few, and let another take his office." This is called "a Psalm of David," and is of the same class as Ps. vi. xxii. xxv. xxxviii. xlii. This class of Psalms is commonly supposed to have expressed David's feelings in the calamitous times of the persecution by Saul, the rebellion of Absalom, &c. They are all also expressive of the condition of a suffering and persecuted Messiah; and are many of them applied to him in the New Testament. The general principle on which most of them are applicable is, not that David personated or typified the Messiah, which is nowhere affirmed, and which can be true in no intelligible sense; but that he was placed in circumstances similar to the Messiah; encompassed with like enemies; persecuted in the same manner. They are expressive of high rank, office, dignity, and piety, cast down, waylaid, and encompassed with enemies. In this way they express general sentiments as much applicable to the case of the Messiah as to David. They were placed in similar circumstances. The same help was needed. The same expressions would convey their feelings. The same treatment was proper for their enemies.—On this principle it was that David deemed his enemy, whoever he was, unworthy of his office; and desired that it should be given to another. In like manner, Judas had rendered himself unworthy of his office, and there was the same propriety that it should be given to another. And as the office had now become vacant by the death of Judas, and according to one declaration in the Psalms; so according to another, it was proper that it should be conferred on some other person. The word rendered "office" in the Psalm, means the care, charge, business, oversight of any thing. It is a word applicable to magistrates, whose care it is to see the laws executed; to military men who have charge of an

21 Wherefore of these men ^a which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

22 Beginning from the baptism

^a Lu. 10. 1, 2. Jno. 15. 27.

army, or a part of an army. In Job x. 12, it is rendered "thy visitation"—thy care. In Num. iv. 16; "and to the office of Eleazer," &c. 2 Kings xi. 18. In the case of David it refers to those who were intrusted with military or other offices, and who had treacherously perverted them to persecute and oppose him; and thus shown themselves unworthy of the office. The Greek word which is used here, ἐπισκοπῆν, is taken from the Septuagint, and means the same thing as the Hebrew. It is well rendered in the margin "office, or charge." It means charge of any kind, or office, without in itself specifying of what kind. It is the *concrete* of the noun ἐπισκοπος, commonly translated "bishop," and means *his* office, charge, or duty. That word designates simply *having the oversight of any thing*, and as applied to the officers of the New Testament, it denotes merely *their having charge of the affairs of the church*, without specifying the *nature* or the *extent* of their jurisdiction. Hence it is often interchanged with presbyter, or elder, and expresses the discharge of the duties of the same office. Acts xx. 28. "Take heed (presbyters or elders, ver. 17) to yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers"—ἐπισκοπούς—bishops. Heb. xii. 15. "Looking diligently," &c. ἐπισκοποῦντες. Phil. i. 1, "with the bishops and deacons." Paul called presbyters, bishops; for they had at that time the same name.—Theodoret, as quoted by Scheusner. 1 Pet. v. 2. "Feed the flock of God (i. 3. you who are elders, or presbyters, v. 1); *taking the oversight thereof*," ἐπισκοποῦντες. These passages shew that the term in the New Testament designates the supervision or care which was exercised over the church, by whomsoever performed, without specifying the nature or extent of the jurisdiction. It is scarcely necessary to add that Peter here did not intend to affirm that Judas sustained any office corresponding to what is now commonly understood by the term "*bishop*."

21, 22. *Wherefore of these men.* Of those who had witnessed the life and works of Christ, and who were therefore qualified to discharge the duties of the office from which Judas fell. Probably

of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

23 And they appointed two, Jo-

Peter refers to the seventy disciples. Luke x. 1, 2. ¶ *Went in and out.* A phrase signifying that he was their constant companion. It expresses in general all the actions of the life. Ps. cxxi. 8. Deut. xxviii. 19; xxxi. 2. ¶ *Beginning from the baptism of John.* The words "beginning from" in the original refer to the Lord Jesus. The meaning may be thus expressed, 'during all the time in which the Lord Jesus beginning (his ministry) at the time when he was baptized by John, went in and out among us, until the time when he was taken up,' &c. From those who had during that time been the constant companions of the Lord Jesus must one be taken, who would thus be a witness of *his whole ministry*. ¶ *Must one be ordained.* It is *fit* or *proper* that one should be ordained. The reason of this was, that Jesus had originally chosen the number twelve for this work, and as *one* of them had fallen, it was proper that the breach should be filled by some person equally qualified for the office. The reason why it was proper that he should be taken from the seventy disciples was, that *they* had been particularly distinguished by Jesus himself, and commanded to preach, and endowed with various powers, and had been witnesses of most of his public life. Luke x. 1—16. The word *ordained* with us has a fixed and definite meaning. It denotes to set apart to a sacred office with the proper form and solemnities, commonly by the imposition of hands. But this is not, of necessity, the meaning of this passage. The Greek word usually denoting *ordination* is not used here. The expression is literally, "must one *be*, or *become*, γινέσθαι, a witness with us of his resurrection." The expression does not imply that he must be set apart in any particular manner, but simply that one should be designated, or appointed for this specific purpose, *to be a witness of the resurrection of Christ*.

23. *And they appointed two.* They *proposed*, or as we should say, *nominated* two. Literally they *placed* two, or made them to stand forth, as persons do who are candidates for office. These two were probably more distinguished by prudence, wisdom, piety, and age than the others; and were so nearly equal in qualifications.

seph called Barsabas, ^a who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which ^b knowest the

a c.15.22. b Je.17.10. Re.2.23.

that they could not determine which was the best fitted for the office. ¶ *Joseph called Barsabas, &c.* It is not certainly known what the name *Barsabas* denotes. The Syriac word *Bar* means *Son*, and the word *Sabas* has been translated *an oath, rest, quiet, or captivity*. Why the name was given to Joseph is not known; but probably it was the family name—*Joseph son of Sabæ*. Some have conjectured that this was the same man who, in ch. iv. 36, is called Barnabas. But of this there is no proof. Lightfoot supposes that he was the son of Alpheus, and brother of James the Less, and that he was chosen on account of his relationship to the family of the Lord Jesus. ¶ *Was surnamed Justus*. Who was called Justus. This is a Latin name, meaning *just*, and was probably given him on account of his distinguished integrity. It was not uncommon among the Jews for a man to have several names. Matt. x. 3. ¶ *And Matthias*. Nothing is known of the family of this man, or of his character, further than that he was numbered with the apostles, and shared their lot in the toils, and persecutions, and honours of preaching the gospel to mankind.

24. *And they prayed*. As they could not agree on the individual, they invoked the direction of God in their choice—an example which should be followed in every selection of an individual to exercise the duties of the sacred office of the ministry. ¶ *Which knowest the hearts of all men*. This is often declared to be the peculiar prerogative of God. Jer. xvii. 10. “*I, Jehovah, search the heart,*” &c. Ps. cxxxix. 1. 23. 1 Chron. xxvii. 9. Yet this attribute is also expressly ascribed to Jesus Christ. Rev. ii. 18. Comp. 23. “*These things saith the Son of God—I am he which searcheth the reins and the hearts.*” John ii. 25; vi. 64; xvi. 19. There are strong reasons for supposing that the apostles on this occasion addressed this prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ. (1.) The name *Lord* is the common appellation which they gave to him. Acts ii. 36; vii. 59, 60; x. 36. 1 Cor. ii. 8. Phil. ii. 11. Rev. xi. 8, &c. (2.) We are told that they worshipped him, or rendered him divine honours after his ascension. Luke xxiv. 52. (3.) The disciples were accustomed to address him after his crucifixion by the names *Lord*

hearts of all *men*, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,

25 That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from

or God indifferently. Acts i. 6. John xx. 28. Acts vii. 59. (4.) This was a matter pertaining especially to the church which the Lord Jesus had redeemed, and *to his own arrangement* in regard to it. He had chosen the apostles; he had given them their commission; he had fixed their number; and what is worthy of special remark heré, he had been the companion of the very men, and knew their qualifications for their work. If the apostles ever called on the Lord Jesus after his ascension, this was the case in which they would be likely to do it. That it *was* done is clear from the account of the death of Stephen. Acts vii. 59. 65. And in this important matter of ordaining a new apostle to be a witness for Jesus Christ, nothing was more natural than that they should address *him*, though bodily absent, as they would assuredly have done if he were present. And if on this occasion they *did* actually address Christ, then two things clearly follow. First, that it is proper to render him divine homage, agreeably to the uniform declarations of the Scripture. John v. 23, “*That all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father.*” Heb. i. 6, “*And let all the angels of God worship him.*” Phil. ii. 10, 11. Rev. v. 8. 14. 1 Thess. iii. 11, 12. Secondly, he must be divine. To none other but God can religious homage be rendered; and none other can be described as *knowing the hearts of all men*. The reason why they appealed to him on this occasion as the *searcher of the heart*, was doubtless the great importance of the work to which the successor of Judas was to be called. One apostle of fair external character had proved a traitor; and with this fact full before them, they appealed to the Saviour himself, to select one who would be true to him, and not bring dishonour on his cause. ¶ *Shew whether, &c.* Shew *which* of them. ¶ *Thou hast chosen*. Not by any public declaration, but which of the two thou hast judged to be best qualified for the work, and hast fitted for it.

25. *That he may take part of this ministry*. The word rendered *part*, *μερῆς*, is the same which in the next verse is rendered *lots*. It properly means a lot, or portion; the portion divided to a man, or assigned to him by casting lots; and also the instrument or means by which the lot

which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place

is made. The former is its meaning here; the *office*, or portion of apostolic work which would fall to him by taking the place of Judas. ¶ *Ministry and apostleship*. This is an instance of the figure of speech *hendiadys*, when two words are used to express one thing. It means the *apostolic ministry*. See instances in Gen. i. 14, "Let them be for signs and for seasons," i. e. signs of seasons. Acts xxiii. 6, "Hope and resurrection of the dead," i. e. hope of the resurrection of the dead. ¶ *That he might go to his own place*. These words by different interpreters have been referred both to Matthias and Judas. Those who refer them to Matthias say that they mean, that Judas fell that Matthias might go to his own place, that is, to a place for which he was fitted, or well qualified. But to this there are many objections. 1. The apostolic office could with no propriety be called, in reference to Matthias, *his own place*, until it was actually conferred on him. 2. There is no instance in which the expression *to go to his own place*, is applied to a successor in office. 3. It is not true that the design or reason why Judas fell was to make way for another. He fell by his crimes; his avarice, his voluntary and enormous wickedness. 4. The former part of the sentence contains this sentiment: 'Another must be appointed to this office which the death of Judas has made vacant.' If this expression, "that he might go," &c., refers to the successor of Judas, it expresses the same sentiment, but more obscurely. 5. The obvious and natural meaning of the phrase is to refer it to Judas. But those who suppose it to refer to Judas differ greatly about its meaning. Some suppose it refers to his own house; that he left the apostolic office to return to his own house; and they appeal to Numbers xxiv. 25. But it is not true that Judas did this; nor is there the least proof that it was his design. Others refer it to the grave, as the *place* of man, where all must lie; and particularly as an ignominious place where Judas should lie. But there is no example of the word *place* being used in this sense; nor is there an instance where a man by being buried is said to return to his own, or proper place. Others have supposed that the manner of his death, by hanging, is referred to, as his own or his proper place. But this interpretation is evidently an unnatural and forced one. The word *place* cannot be applied to an *act* of self-injur-

der. It denotes habitation, abode, situation in which to remain; not an *act*. These are the only interpretations which can be suggested of the passage, except the common and obvious one of referring it to the future abode of Judas in the world of wo. This might be said to be his *own*, as it was adapted to him; as he had prepared himself for it; and as it was proper that he who had betrayed his Lord should remain there. This interpretation may be defended by the following considerations: 1. It is the obvious and natural meaning of the words. It commends itself by its simplicity, and its evident connexion with the context. It has in all ages been the common interpretation; nor has any other been adopted unless there was a theory to be defended about future punishment. Unless men had previously made up their minds *not to believe in future punishment*, no one would ever have thought of any other interpretation. This fact alone throws strong light on the meaning of the passage. 2. It accords with the crimes of Judas, and with all that we know of him. The *future doom* of Judas was not unknown to the apostles. Jesus Christ had expressly declared this; "it had been good for that man if he had not been born;" a declaration which *could not* be true if, after *any* limited period of suffering, he were at last admitted to eternal happiness. See Matt. xxvi. 24, and the Note on that place. This declaration was made in the presence of the eleven apostles, at the institution of the Lord's supper, at a time when their attention was absorbed with deep interest in what Christ said; and it was therefore a declaration which they would not be likely to forget. As they *knew* the fate of Judas, nothing was more natural for them than to speak of it familiarly as a thing which *had* actually occurred when he betrayed his Lord, hung himself, and went to his own place. 3. The expression "to go to his own place," is one which is used by the ancient writers to denote going to the eternal destiny. Thus the Jewish Tract, *Baal Turim*, on Num. xxiv. 25, says, "Balaam went to his own place, i. e. to Gehenna," to hell. Thus the Targum, or Chaldee Paraphrase on Eccl. vi. 6, says, "Although the days of a man's life were two thousand years, and he did not study the law, and do justice, in the day of his death his soul shall descend to hell, to the one place where all sinners go." Thus Ignatius in the Epistle to the

26 And they gave forth their lots: and the lot fell upon Matthi-

as; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Magnesians says, "Because all things have an end, the two things death and life shall lie down together, and *each one shall go to his own place.*" The phrase *his own place*, means the place or abode which is fitted for him, which is his appropriate home. Judas was not in a place which befitted his character when he was an apostle; he was not in such a place in the church; he would not be in heaven. Hell was the only place which was fitted to the man of avarice and of treason. And if this be the true interpretation of this passage, then it follows, 1. That there will be such a thing as future, eternal punishment. One such man there certainly is in hell, and ever will be. If there is *one* there, for the same reason there may be others. All objections to the doctrine are removed by this single fact; and it cannot be true that *all* men will be saved. 2. Each individual in eternity will find his own proper place. Hell is not an arbitrary appointment. Every man will go to the place for which his character is fitted. The hypocrite is not fitted for heaven. The man of pride, and avarice, and pollution, and falsehood, is not fitted for heaven. The place *adapted* to such men is hell; and the design of the judgment will be to assign to each individual *his proper abode* in the eternal world. 3. The design of the judgment of the great day will be to assign to all the inhabitants of this world their *proper place*. It would not be fit that the holy and pure should dwell for ever in the same place with the unholy and impure; and the Lord Jesus will come to assign to each his appropriate eternal habitation. 4. The sinner will have no cause of complaint. If he is assigned to his *proper place*, he cannot complain. If he is *unfit* for heaven, he cannot complain that he is excluded. And if his character and feelings are such as make it *proper* that he should find his eternal abode among the enemies of God, then he must expect that a God of justice and equity will assign him such a doom. But, 5. This will not alleviate his pain; it will *deepen* his woe. He will have the eternal consciousness that that, and that only, is *his place*—the doom for which he is fitted. The prison is no less dreadful because a man is conscious that he deserves it. The gallows is not the less terrible, because the man knows that he *deserves* to die. And the eternal consciousness of the sinner that

he is *unfit* for heaven; that there is not a solitary soul there with whom he could have sympathy or friendship; that he is fit for hell, and hell only, will be an ingredient of eternal bitterness in the cup of woe that awaits him. Let not the sinner then hope to escape; for God will assuredly appoint his residence in that world to which his character here is adapted.

The character and end of Judas is one of the most important and instructive in history. It teaches us, 1. That Christ may employ wicked men for important purposes in his kingdom. See Note on ver. 17. He does no violence to their freedom, suffers them to act as they please, but brings important ends out of their conduct. One of the most conclusive arguments for the pure character of Jesus Christ is drawn from the silent testimony of Judas. 2. The character of Judas was eminently base and wicked. He was influenced by one of the worst human passions; and yet he cloaked it from all the apostles. It was remarkable that any man should have *thought* of making money in such a band of men; but avarice will show itself every where. 3. We see the effects of avarice in the church. It led to the betraying of Jesus Christ, and to his death; and it has often betrayed the cause of pure religion since. There is no single human passion that has done so much evil in the church of God as this. It *may* be consistent with external decency and order; it is that on which the world acts, and which it approves; and it may therefore be indulged without disgrace; while open and acknowledged vices would expose their possessors to shame and ruin. And yet it paralyzes and betrays religion probably more than any single propensity of man. 4. The character of an avaricious man in the church will be developed. Opportunities will occur when it will be seen and known by what principle the man is influenced. So it was with Achan (Josh. vii. 21); so it was with Judas; and so it will be with all. Occasions will occur which will *test* the character, and show what manner of spirit a man is of. Every appeal to a man's benevolence, every call upon his charity, shows what spirit influences him, and whether he is actuated by the love of gold, or by the love of Jesus Christ and his cause.

26. And they gave forth their lots. Some

have supposed that this means they *voted*. But to this interpretation there are insuperable objections. 1. The word *lots*, *κλήρους*, is not used to express *votes*, or *suffrage*. 2. The expression "the lot fell upon" is not consistent with the notion of voting. It is commonly expressive of casting lots. 3. Casting lots was common among the Jews on important and difficult occasions, and it was natural that the apostles should resort to it in this. Thus David divided the priests by lot. 1 Chron. xxiv. 5. The land of Canaan was divided by lot. Num. xxvi. 55. Josh. xv. xvi. xvii. &c. Jonathan, son of Saul, was detected as having violated his father's command, and as bringing calamity on the Israelites, by lot. 1 Sam. xiv. 41, 42. Achan was detected by lot. Josh. vii. 16. 18. In these cases the use of the lot was regarded as a solemn appeal to God, for his direct interference in cases which they could not themselves decide. Prov. xvi. 33, "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." The choice of an apostle was an event of the same kind, and was regarded as a solemn appeal to God for his direction and guidance, in a case which the apostles could not determine. The manner in which this was done is not certainly known. The common mode of casting lots, was to write the names of the *persons* on pieces of stone, wood, &c. and put them in one urn; and the name of the office, portion, &c. on others. These were then placed in an urn with other pieces of stone, &c. which were blank. The names were then drawn at random, and also the other pieces, and this determined the case. The casting of a lot is determined by laws of nature, as regularly as any thing else. There is properly no *chance* in it. We do not know how a die may turn up; but this does not imply that it will turn up without any regard to rule, or at haphazard. We cannot trace the influences which may determine either this or that side to come up; but still it is done by regular and proper laws, and according to the circumstances of position, force, &c. in which it is cast. Still although it does not imply any *special* or miraculous interposition of Providence; though it may not be absolutely wrong, in cases which cannot otherwise be determined, to use the lot, yet it does not follow that it is proper often to make this appeal. Almost all cases of doubt can be determined more satisfactorily in some other way than by the lot. The habit of appealing to it engenders the love of hazards and of games; leads to heart-

burnings, to jealousies, to envy, to strife, and to dishonesty. Still less does the example of the apostles authorize *games* of hazard, or lotteries, which are positively evil, and attended with ruinous consequences, apart from any inquiry about the lawfulness of the lot. They either originate in, or promote, covetousness, neglect of regular industry, envy, jealousy, disappointment, dissipation, bankruptcy, falsehood, and despair. What is gained by one is lost by another, and both the gain and the loss promote some of the worst passions of man; boasting, triumph, self-confidence, indolence, dissipation, on the one hand; and envy, disappointment, sullenness, desire of revenge, remorse, and ruin, on the other. God intended that man should live by sober toil. All departures from this great law of our social existence lead to ruin. ¶ *Their lots*. The lots which were to decide their case. They are called *theirs*, because they were to determine which of them should be called to the apostolic office. ¶ *The lot fell*. This is an expression applicable to casting lots, not to voting. ¶ *He was numbered*. By the casting of the lot. *συγκριτα-ψηφισθη*. This word is from *ψηφο*;—a *calculus*, or *pebble*, by which votes were given, or lots were cast. It means, that *by the result of the lot*, he was reckoned as an apostle. Nothing further is related of Matthias in the New Testament. Where he laboured, and when and where he died, is unknown, nor is there any tradition on which reliance is to be placed. The election of Matthias throws some light on the organization of the church. 1. He was chosen to fill the place vacated by Judas, and for a specific purpose, to be a *witness* of the resurrection of Christ. There is no mention of any other design. It was not to ordain men exclusively, or to rule over the churches, but to be a witness to an important fact. 2. There is no intimation here that it was designed that there should be *successors* to the apostles in the *peculiar* duties of the apostolic office. The election was for a definite object, and was therefore temporary. It was to fill up the *number* originally appointed by Christ. When the purpose for which he was appointed was accomplished, the *peculiar* part of the apostolic work ceased of course. 3. There *could be* no succession in our times to the peculiar apostolic office. They were to be *witnesses* of the work of Christ. For this they were sent forth. And when the desired effect resulting from such a witnessing was accomplished, the office itself would cease. Hence there is no record

CHAPTER II.

AND when the day of Pentecost ^a was fully come, they ^b

that after this the church even pretended to appoint successors to the apostles to discharge their *peculiar* work. And hence no ministers of the gospel can now pretend to be their successors in the *peculiar* and *original* design of the appointment of the apostles. 4. The only other apostle mentioned in the New Testament is the apostle Paul, not appointed as the successor of the others, not with any peculiar design except to be an apostle to the Gentiles, as the others were to the Jews, and appointed for the same end, to testify that Jesus Christ was alive, and that *he had seen him* after he rose. 1 Cor. xv. 8; ix. 1. Acts xxii. 8, 9, 14, 15; ix. 15; xxvi. 17, 18. The ministers of religion, therefore, are successors of the apostles, not in their peculiar office as witnesses, but as preachers of the word, and as appointed to establish, to organize, and to edify and rule the churches. The *peculiar* work of the apostleship ceased with their death. The ordinary work of the ministry, which they held in common with all others who preach the gospel, will continue to the end of time.

CHAPTER II.

1. *And when the day of Pentecost.* The word *Pentecost* is a Greek word, signifying the *fiftieth* part of a thing; or the *fiftieth* in order. Among the Jews it was applied to one of their three great feasts which began on the *fiftieth* day after the Passover. This feast was reckoned from the sixteenth day of the month *ABIB*, or April, or the *second day* of the Passover. The paschal lamb was slain on the fourteenth of the month at even (Lev. xxiii. 5). On the fifteenth of the month was a holy convocation—the proper beginning of the feast; on the sixteenth was the offering of the first-fruits of harvest, and *from that day* they were to reckon *seven weeks*, i. e. forty-nine days to the feast called the feast of Pentecost, so that it occurred *fifty* days after the first day of the feast of the Passover. This feast was also called *the feast of weeks*, from the circumstance that it followed a succession of weeks. Ex. xxxiv. 22. Num. xxviii. 26. Deut. xvi. 10. It was also a *harvest festival*, and was accordingly called *the feast of harvest*. And it was for this reason that two loaves made of new meal were offered on this occasion as first-fruits. Lev. xxiii. 18, 20. Num. xxviii. 27, 31. ¶ *Was fully come.* When the day had arrived. The word means

were all with one accord in one place.

a Le. 23. 15. b c. 1. 14.

here simply, *had come*. Comp. Mark i. 15. Luke i. 57. This fact is mentioned, that the time of the Pentecost had come, or fully arrived, to account for what is related afterwards, that there were so many strangers and foreigners present. The promised influences of the Spirit were withheld until the greatest possible numbers of Jews should be present at Jerusalem at the same time, and thus an opportunity be afforded of preaching the gospel to vast multitudes in the very place where the Lord Jesus was crucified, and also an opportunity be afforded of sending the gospel by them into distant parts of the earth. ¶ *They were all.* Probably not only the apostles, but also the one hundred and twenty mentioned in ch. i. 15. ¶ *With one accord.* See ch. i. 14. It is probable they had *continued* together until this time, and given themselves entirely to the business of devotion. ¶ *In one place.* Where this was cannot be known. Commentators have been much divided in their conjectures about it. Some have supposed it was in the upper room mentioned (ch. i. 13); others that it was a room in the temple; others that it was in a synagogue; others, that it was in the promiscuous multitude that assembled for devotion in the courts of the temple. See ver. 2. It has by many been supposed that this took place on the first day of the week, that is on the Christian Sabbath. But there is a difficulty in establishing this. There was probably a difference among the Jews themselves on this subject. The law said that they should reckon seven Sabbaths, that is seven weeks *from the morrow after the Sabbath*. Lev. xxiii. 15. By this Sabbath the Pharisees understood the *second day* of the Passover, on whatever day of the week it occurred, which was kept as a holy assembly, and might be called a Sabbath. But the Caraites, or those who insisted on a *literal* interpretation of the Scriptures, maintained that by the *Sabbath* here was meant the *usual Sabbath*, the seventh day of the week. Consequently *with them* the day of Pentecost *always* occurred on the *first day* of the week; and if the apostles fell in with their views, the day was fully come on what is now the Christian Sabbath. But if the views of the Pharisees were followed, and the Lord Jesus had with them kept the Passover on *Thursday*, as many

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled ^a

a c.4.31.

have supposed, then the day of Pentecost would have occurred on the Jewish Sabbath, that is on *Saturday*. *Kuinöel. Light-foot*. It is impossible to determine the truth on this subject. Nor is it of much importance. The day of Pentecost was kept by the Jews also as a festival to commemorate the giving of the law on mount Sinai.

2. *And suddenly*. It burst upon them at once. Though they were waiting for the descent of the Spirit, yet it is not probable that they expected it in this manner. As this was an important event, and one on which the welfare of the church depended, it was proper that the gift of the Holy Spirit should take place in some *striking and sensible* manner, so as to convince their own minds that the promise was fulfilled, and so as deeply to impress others with the greatness and importance of the event. ¶ *There came a sound.* ἤχος. This word is applied to any noise or report. Heb. xii. 19, "The sound of a trumpet." Luke iv. 37, "The fame of him," &c. Comp. Mark i. 28. ¶ *From heaven*. Appearing to rush down from the sky. It was fitted therefore to attract their attention no less from the *direction* from which it came, than on account of its *suddenness and violence*. Tempests blow commonly horizontally. This appeared to come *from above*; and this is all that is meant by the expression "from heaven." ¶ *As of a rushing mighty wind*. Literally, "as of a violent wind or gale," borne along (πνεύμης), *sweeping along like a tempest*. Such a wind is sometimes borne along so violently, and with such a noise, as to make it difficult even to hear the thunder in the gale. Such appears to have been the sound of this remarkable phenomenon. It does not appear that there was any wind; all might have been still; but the sudden sound was *like* such a sweeping tempest. It may be remarked, however, that the *wind* in the sacred Scriptures is often put as an emblem of a divine influence. It is *invisible*, yet *mighty*; and thus represents the agency of the Holy Spirit. The same word in Hebrew (רוח) and in Greek (πνευμα), is used to denote both. The mighty power of God may be denoted also by the violence of a mighty tempest. 1 Kings xix. 11. Ps. xxix. civ. 3; xviii. 10. And thus Jesus by his *breath* indicated to the apostles the

all the house where they were sitting.

3 And there appeared unto them

conferring of the Holy Ghost. John xx. 22. In this place *the sound* as of a gale was emblematic of the mighty power of the Spirit, and of the great effects which his coming would accomplish among men. ¶ *And it filled*. Not the *wind* filled, but the *sound*. This is evident, (1.) Because there is no affirmation that there was any wind. (2.) The grammatical structure of the sentence will admit no other construction. The word "filled" has no nominative case but "the sound." And suddenly there was a sound as of a wind, and (the sound) filled the house. In the Greek, the word "wind" is in the genitive or possessive case. It may be remarked here, that this miracle was *really* far more striking than the common supposition makes it to have been. A tempest might have been terrific. A mighty wind might have alarmed them. But there would have been nothing unusual or remarkable in it. Such things often occurred; and the thoughts would have been directed of course to the storm as an ordinary, though perhaps alarming occurrence. But when all was still; when there was no storm, no wind, no rain, no thunder, such a rushing sound must have arrested their attention, and directed all minds to so unusual and unaccountable an occurrence. ¶ *All the house*. Some have supposed that this was a room in or near the temple. But as the temple is not expressly mentioned, this is improbable. It was probably the private dwelling mentioned in ch. i. 13. If it be said that such a dwelling could not contain so large a multitude as soon assembled, it may be replied that their houses had large central courts (see Note, Matt. ix. 2); and that it is not affirmed that the transaction recorded in this chapter occurred *in* the room which they occupied. It is probable that it took place in the court and around the house.

3. *And there appeared unto them*. They were *seen by them*, or they saw. They were first seen by them in the room before they rested on the heads of the disciples. Perhaps the fire appeared at first as scintillations or coruscations, until it became fixed on their heads. ¶ *Tongues*. γλῶσσαι. The word *tongue* occurs often in the Scriptures to denote the member which is the instrument of taste and speech, and also to denote *language* or speech itself.

cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them :

4 And they were all filled ^a with

^a c.1.5.

It is also used, as with us, to denote that which *in shape* resembles the tongue. Thus Josh. vii. 21, 24 (in Hebrew), "a tongue of gold," i. e. a *wedge* of gold. Josh. xv. 5; xviii. 19. Isa. xi. 15, "The tongue of the sea," i. e. a bay or gulf. Thus also we say, a tongue of land. The phrase "tongue of fire" occurs once, and once only, in the Old Testament (Isa. v. 24), "Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble (Heb. *tongue of fire*), and the flame consumeth," &c. In this place the *name* tongue is given from the *resemblance* of a pointed flame to the human tongue. Any thing long, narrow, and tending to a point, is thus in the Hebrew called a *tongue*. The word here means, therefore, slender and pointed appearances of flame; perhaps at first moving irregularly around the room. ¶ *Cloven*. Divided, separated.

διαμεριζόμενοι, from the verb to *divide*, or *distribute into parts*. Matt. xxviii. 35, "They *parted* his garments." Luke xxii. 17, "Take this (the cup), and *divide* it among yourselves." Probably the common opinion is that these *tongues* or flames were, *each one* of them, split, or forked, or cloven. But this is not the sense of the expression. It means that they were separated or divided *one from another*; not *one great flame*, but broken up, or *cloven* into many parts; and probably moving without order in the room. In the Syriac it is, "And there appeared unto them tongues which divided themselves, like fire, and sat upon each of them." The old Ethiopic version reads it, "And *fire*, as it were, appeared to them, and sat on them." ¶ *And sat upon each of them*. Or rested, in the form of a lambent or gentle flame, upon the head of each one. This evinced that the prodigy was directed to *them*, and was a very significant emblem of the promised descent of the Holy Spirit. After the rushing sound, and the appearance of the flames, they could not doubt that here was some remarkable interposition of God. The appearance of *fire*, or *flame*, has always been regarded as a most striking emblem of the Divinity. Thus, Exod. iii. 2, 3, God is said to have manifested himself to Moses in a bush which was *burning*, yet not consumed. Thus, Exod. xix. 16—20, God descended on mount Sinai in the midst of thunders, and lightnings, and smoke, and *fire*, striking

the Holy Ghost, and began ^a to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

^b Mar. 16. 17. c. 10. 46.

emblems of his presence and power. See also Gen. xv. 17. Thus Deut. iv. 24, God is said to be "a consuming fire." Comp. Heb. xii. 29. See Ezek. i. 4. Ps. xviii. 12—14. The classic reader will also instantly recall the beautiful description in Virgil. (*Æniad*, b. ii. 680—691.) Other instances of a similar prodigy are also recorded in profane writers. Pliny, H. N. 2. 37. Livy, i. 39. These appearances to the apostles were emblematic, doubtless, (1.) Of the promised Holy Spirit, as a Spirit of *purity* and of *power*. The prediction of John the Baptist, "He shall baptize with the Holy Ghost and with *fire*" (Matt. iii. 11), would probably be recalled at once to their memory. (2.) The *peculiar* appearance, that of *tongues*, was an emblem of the diversity of *languages* which they were about to be able to utter. Any *form* of fire would have denoted the presence and power of God; but a *form* was adopted expressive of the *case*. Thus *any appearance* at the baptism of Jesus might have denoted the presence and approbation of God; but the form chosen was that of a *dove* descending; expressive of the mild and gentle virtues with which he was to be imbued. So in Ezek. i. 4, any form of flame might have expressed the presence of God; but the appearance *actually* was emblematical of his providence. In the same way, the appearance here, expressed their peculiar endowments for entering on their great work—the ability to speak *powerfully* with new tongues.

4. *Were all filled with the Holy Ghost*. Were entirely under his sacred influence and power. See Note, Luke i. 41. 67. To be *filled* with any thing is a phrase denoting that all the faculties are pervaded by it, engaged in it, or under its influence. Acts iii. 10, "Were *filled* with wonder and amazement." v. 17, "Filled with indignation." xiii. 45, "Filled with envy." Ver. 52, "Filled with joy and the Holy Ghost." ¶ *Began to speak with other tongues*. In other languages than their native tongue. The languages which they spoke are specified in ver. 8—11. ¶ *As the Spirit gave them utterance*. As the Spirit gave them power to speak. This language implies plainly that they were now endued with a faculty of speaking languages which they had not before learned. Their native tongue was

that of Galilee, a somewhat barbarous dialect of the common language used in Judea, *the Syro-Chaldaic*. It is possible that some of them might have been partially acquainted with the Greek and Latin, as both of them were spoken among the Jews to some extent; but there is not the slightest evidence that they were acquainted with the languages of the different nations afterwards specified. Various attempts have been made to account for this remarkable phenomenon without supposing it to be a miracle. But the natural and obvious meaning of the passage is, that they were endowed by the miraculous power of the Holy Ghost with ability to speak foreign languages, and languages to them before unknown. It does not appear that *each one* had the power of speaking *all* the languages which are specified (ver. 9—11), but that this ability was among them, and that together they could speak these languages; probably some one, and some another. The following remarks may perhaps throw some light on this remarkable occurrence. (1.) This ability was predicted in the Old Testament (Isa. xxviii. 11), "With....another tongue will he speak unto this people." Comp. 1 Cor. xiv. 21, where this passage is expressly applied to the power of speaking foreign languages under the gospel. (2.) It was predicted by the Lord Jesus that they should have this power. Mark xvi. 17, "These signs shall follow them that believe....they shall speak with *new tongues*." (3.) The ability to do it existed extensively and long in the church. 1 Cor. xii. 10, 11. "To another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit." Ver. 28, "God hath set in the church....diversities of tongues." 30; xiv. 2. 4, 5, 6. 9. 13, 14. 18, 19. 22, 23. 27. 39. From this it appears that the power was well known in the church, and was not confined to the apostles. This also may show that in the case in the Acts, the power was conferred on other members of the church as well as the apostles. (4.) It was very important that they should be endowed with this power in their great work. They were going forth to preach to all nations; and though the Greek and Roman tongues were extensively spoken, yet their use was not universal; nor is it known that the apostles were skilled in those languages. To preach to all nations, it was indispensable that they

should be able to understand their language. And it was necessary that they should be endowed with ability to speak them without the slow process of being compelled to learn them. (5.) One design was to establish the gospel by means of miracles. Yet no miracle could be more striking than the power of conveying their sentiments at once into all the languages of the earth. When it is remembered what a slow and toilsome process it is to learn a foreign tongue, this would be regarded by the heathen as one of the most striking miracles which were ever wrought in the establishment of the Christian faith. 1 Cor. xiv. 22. 24, 25. (6.) The *reality and certainty* of this miracle is strongly attested by the early triumphs of the gospel. That the gospel was early spread over all the world, and that too by the apostles of Jesus Christ, by men of Galilee, is the clear testimony of all history. They preached it in Arabia, Greece, Syria, Asia, Persia, Africa, and Rome. Yet how *could* this have been effected without a miraculous power of speaking the languages used in all those places? Now, it requires the toil of many years to speak in foreign languages; and the *recorded success* of the gospel is one of the most striking attestations to the fact of the miracle that could be conceived. (7.) The *corruption* of language was one of the most decided effects of *sin*, of pride and ambition, and the source of endless embarrassments and difficulties. Gen. xi. It is not to be regarded as wonderful if *one* of the effects of the plan of recovering men should be to show the power of God over *all* evil; and thus to furnish striking evidence that the gospel *could* meet all the crimes and calamities of men. And we may add, (8.) That from this we see the necessity now of *training* men who are to be missionaries to other lands. The gift of miracles is withdrawn. The apostles, by that miracle, simply were *empowered* to speak other languages. That power must still be had if the gospel is to be preached. But it is now to be obtained, not by miracle, but by slow and careful study and toil. If possessed, men must be taught it. They must labour for it. And as the church is bound (Matt. xxviii. 19) to send the gospel to all nations, so it is bound to provide that the *teachers* who shall be sent forth shall be qualified for their work. Hence *one* of the reasons of the importance of training men for the holy ministry.

5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

6 Now ¹ when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together,

¹ When this voice was made.

5. *There were dwelling at Jerusalem.* The word rendered *dwelling*, κατοικοῦντες, properly means to have a *fixed* and permanent habitation, in distinction from another word, περικοῦντες, which means to have a *temporary* and *transient* residence in a place. But it is not always confined to this signification; and it is not improbable that many wealthy foreign Jews had a permanent residence in Jerusalem for the convenience of being near the temple. This was the more probable, as about that time the Messiah was expected to appear, Matt. ii. ¶ *Jews.* Jews by birth; of Jewish descent, and religion. ¶ *Devout men*, ἄνδρες εὐλαβεῖς. Literally men of cautious and circumspect lives, who lived in a prudent manner. The term is applied to men who were cautious about offending God; who were careful to observe his commandments. It hence is a general expression to denote *pious* or *religious* men. Acts viii. 2, "And devout men carried Stephen to his burial." Luke ii. 25, "And the same man (Simeon) was just, and devout." The word *devout* means, "yielding a solemn and reverential attention to God in religious exercises, particularly in prayer, pious, sincere, solemn" (*Webster*), and very well expresses the force of the original. ¶ *Out of every nation under heaven.* A general expression meaning from all parts of the earth. The countries from which they came are more particularly specified in ver. 9—11. The Jews at that time were scattered into almost all nations, and in all places had synagogues. See Note, John vii. 35. Still they would naturally desire to be present as often as possible at the great feasts of the nation in Jerusalem. Many would seek a residence there for the convenience of being present at the religious solemnities. Many who came up to the feast of the Passover would remain to the feast of the Pentecost. And the consequence was, that on such occasions, the city would be full of strangers. We are told, that when Titus besieged Jerusalem at about the feast of the Passover, there were no less than three millions of people in the city, and this great multitude greatly deepened the calamities arising from the siege. Josephus also

and were confounded,² because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

7 And they were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another,

² or, troubled in mind.

mentions an instance where great multitudes of Jews from other nations were present at the feast of Pentecost. Jewish War, b. ii. ch. iii. § 1.

6. *When this was noised abroad.* When the rumour of this remarkable transaction was spread, as it naturally would be without delay. ¶ *Were confounded.* συνεχούσθαι. Were violently moved and agitated; were amazed, and astonished at the remarkable occurrence. ¶ *Every man heard them speak, &c.* Though the multitude spoke different tongues, yet they now heard *Galileans* use the language which they had learned in foreign nations. ¶ *His own language.* His own *dialect*, διαλεκτῶ. His own *idiom*, whether it was a foreign language, or whether it was a modification of the Hebrew. The word may mean either; but it is probable that the foreign Jews would greatly modify the Hebrew, or conform almost entirely to the language spoken in the country where they lived.—We may remark here, that *this* effect on the first descent of the Holy Ghost was not peculiar to that time. A work of grace on the hearts of men in a revival of religion will always *be noised abroad*. A multitude will come together, and God often, as he did here, makes use of this motive to bring them under the influence of religion. *Curiosity* was the motive here, and it was the *occasion* of their being brought under the influence of the truth, and of the conversion. In thousands of cases, this has occurred since. The *effect* of what they saw was to confound them. They made no complaint at first of the *irregularity* of what was done, but were all amazed and overwhelmed. So the effect of a revival of religion is often to convince the multitude that it is indeed a work of the Holy One; to amaze them by the display of his power; and to silence opposition and cavil by the manifest presence and the power of God. A *few* afterwards began to cavil (ver. 13), as some will always do in a revival; but the mass were convinced, as will be the case always, that this was a mighty display of the power of God.

7. *Galileans?* Inhabitants of Galilee. It was remarkable that *they* should speak

Behold, are not all these which speak, Galileans? ^a

8 And how hear we every man in

a c. l. 11.

in this manner, because, (1.) They were proverbially ignorant, rude, and uncivilized. John i. 45. Hence the term *Galilean* was used as an expression of the deepest reproach and contempt. Mark xiv. 70. John vii. 52. (2.) Their dialect was proverbially barbarous and corrupt. Mark xiv. 70. Luke xxii. 59. They were regarded as an outlandish people, unacquainted with other nations and languages, and hence the amazement that they could address them in the refined language of other people. Their native ignorance was the occasion of making the miracle more striking. The native *weakness* and inability of Christian ministers makes the grace and glory of God more remarkable in the success of the gospel. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." 2 Cor. iv. 7. The *success* which God often grants to those who are of slender endowments and of little learning, though blessed with a humble and pious heart, is often amazing to the men of the world. God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. 1 Cor. i. 27. This should teach us that no talent or attainment is too humble to be employed for mighty purposes, in its proper sphere, in the kingdom of Christ, and that pious effort may accomplish much, may awe and amaze the world, and then burn in heaven with increasing lustre for ever; while pride, and learning, and talent may blaze uselessly among men, or kindle up the worst passions of our nature, and then be extinguished in eternal night.

8. *Wherein we were born?* That is, as we say, in our *native* language; that which is spoken where we were born.

9. *Parthians, &c.* To show the surprising extent and power of this miracle, Luke enumerates the different nations that were represented then at Jerusalem. In this way the number of *languages* which the apostles spoke, and the extent of the miracle, can be ascertained. The enumeration of these nations begins at the east, and proceeds to the west. *Parthians* mean those Jews, or proselytes, who dwelt in *Parthia*. This country was a part of Persia, and was situated between the Persian gulf and the Tigris on the west, and the river Indus on the east. To the south it was bounded by

our own tongue, wherein we were born?

9 Parthians, and Medes, and

the desert of Caramania, and it had Media on the north. Their empire lasted about four hundred years, and they were much distinguished for their manner of fighting. They usually fought on horseback, and when appearing to retreat, discharged their arrows with great execution behind them. They were a part of the vast Scythian horde of Asia, and disputed the empire of the east with the Romans. The language spoken there was that of *Persia*, and in ancient writers, *Parthia* and *Persia* often mean the same country. ¶ *Medes*. Inhabitants of *Media*. This country was situated north of Parthia, and south of the Caspian sea. It was about the size of Spain, and was one of the richest parts of Asia. In the Scriptures it is called *Madai*. Gen. x. 2. The *Medes* are often mentioned, commonly in connexion with the *Persians*, with whom they were often connected under the same government. 2 Kings xvii. 6; xviii. 2. Esther i. 19. Jer. xxv. 25. Dan. v. 28. vi. 8; ix. 1. Esther i. 3. 14. 18. Dan. viii. 20. The language spoken here was also that of Persia. In this whole region many Jews remained after the Babylonish captivity, who chose not to return with their brethren to the land of their fathers. From the descendants of these probably were those who were now assembled from those places at Jerusalem. ¶ *Elamites*. *Elam* is often mentioned in the Old Testament. The nation was descended from *Elam*, the son of Shem. Gen. x. 22. It is mentioned as being in alliance with Amraphel, the king of Shinar, and Arioch, king of Ellasar, and Tidal, king of nations. Gen. xiv. 1. Of these nations in alliance, Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, was the chief. ver. 4. See also Ezra ii. 7; viii. 7. Neh. vii. 12. 34. Isa. xi. 11; xxi. 2; xxii. 6, &c. They are mentioned as a part of the Persian empire, and Daniel is said to have resided at *Shushan*, which is in the province of *Elam*. Dan. viii. 2. The Greeks and Romans gave to this country the name of *Elymais*. It is now called *Kusistan*. It was bounded by Persia on the east; by Media on the north; by Babylonia on the west; and by the Persian gulf on the south. The Elamites were a warlike people, and celebrated for the use of the bow. Isa. xxii. 6. Jer. xlix. 35. The language of this people was of course the Persian. Its capital *Shusan*, called

Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappa-

by the Greeks *Susa*, was much celebrated. It is said to have been fifteen miles in circumference; and was adorned with the celebrated palace of Ahasuerus. The inhabitants still pretend to show there the tomb of the prophet Daniel. ¶ *Mesopotamia*. This name, which is Greek, signifies *between the rivers*; that is, the region lying between the rivers *Euphrates* and *Tigris*. In Hebrew it was called *Aram-Naharaim*; that is, *Aram*, or *Syria* of the two rivers. It was also called *Padan Aram*, the plain of *Syria*. In this region were situated some important places mentioned in the Bible:—*Ur of the Chaldees*, the birth-place of *Abraham* (Gen. xi. 27, 28); *Haran*, where *Terah* stopped on his journey and died (Gen. xi. 27, 28); *Carchemish* (2 Kings xxiii. 29); *Hena* (2 Kings xix. 12); *Sepharvaim* (2 Kings xxvii. 24). This region, known as *Mesopotamia*, extended between the two rivers from their sources to *Babylon* on the south. It had on the north *Armenia*, on the west *Syria*, on the east *Persia*, and on the south *Babylonia*. It was an extensive, level, and fertile country. The language spoken here was probably the *Syriac*, with perhaps a mixture of the *Chaldee*. ¶ *In Judea*. This expression has greatly perplexed commentators. It has been thought difficult to see why *Judea* should be mentioned, as if it were a matter of surprise that they could speak in this language. Some have supposed an error in the manuscripts, and have proposed to read *Armenia*, or *India*, or *Lydia*, or *Idumea*, &c. But all this has been without any authority. Others have supposed that the language of *Galilee* was so different from that of the other parts of *Judea*, as to render it remarkable that they could speak that dialect. But this is an idle supposition. This is one of the many instances in which commentators have perplexed themselves to very little purpose. *Luke* recorded this as any other historian would have done. In running over the languages which they spoke, he enumerated this as a matter of course, not that it was remarkable simply that they should speak the language of *Judea*, but that they should speak so many, meaning about the same by it as if he had said *they spoke every language in the world*. Just as if a similar miracle were to occur at this time among an assembly of native Englishmen and foreigners. In describing it, nothing would be more natural than to say, they spoke French, and German, and

docia, in *Pontus*, and *Asia*,
10 *Phrygia*, and *Pamphylia*, in

Spanish, and *English*, and *Italian*, &c. In this there would be nothing remarkable, except that they spoke so many languages. ¶ *Cappadocia*. This was a region of *Asia Minor*, and was bounded on the east by *Armenia*, on the north by *Pontus* and the *Euxine sea*, west by *Lycaonia*, and south by *Cilicia*. The language which was spoken here is not certainly known. It was probably, however, a mixed dialect made up of Greek and *Syriac*, perhaps the same as their neighbours, the *Lycaonians*. Acts xiv. 11. This place was formerly celebrated for iniquity, and is mentioned in Greek writers as one of the three eminently wicked places, whose name began with C. The others were *Crete* (Comp. Titus i. 12), and *Cilicia*. After its conversion to the Christian religion, however, it produced many eminent men, among whom were *Gregory Nyssen*, and *Basil the Great*. It was one of the places to which *Peter* directed an epistle. 1 Pet. i. 1. ¶ *In Pontus*. This was another province of *Asia Minor*, and was situated north of *Cappadocia*, and was bounded west by *Paphlagonia*. *Pontus* and *Cappadocia* under the Romans constituted one province. This was one of the places to which the apostle *Peter* directed his epistle. 1 Pet. i. 1. This was the birth-place of *Aquila*, one of the companions of *Paul*. Acts xviii. 2. 18. 26. Rom. xvi. 3. 1 Cor. xvi. 19. 2 Tim. iv. 19. ¶ *And Asia*. *Pontus*, and *Cappadocia*, &c. were parts of *Asia*. But the word *Asia* is doubtless used here to denote the regions or provinces west of these, which are not particularly enumerated. Thus it is used Acts vi. 9; xv. 6; xx. 16. The capital of this region was *Ephesus*. See also 1 Pet. i. 1. This region was frequently called *Ionia*, and was afterwards the seat of the seven churches in *Asia*. Rev. i. 4.

10. *Phrygia* and *Pamphylia*. These were also two provinces of *Asia Minor*. *Phrygia* was surrounded by *Galatia*, *Cappadocia*, and *Pisidia*. *Pamphylia* was on the *Mediterranean*, and was bounded north by *Pisidia*. The language of all these places was doubtless the *Greek*, more or less pure. ¶ *In Egypt*. This was that extensive country, well known, on the south of the *Mediterranean*, watered by the *Nile*. It extends 600 miles from north to south, and from 100 to 120 east and west. The language used there was the *Coptic*. At present the *Arabic* is spoken. Vast numbers of Jews dwelt

Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,

in Egypt; and many from that country would be present at the great feasts at Jerusalem. In this country the first translation of the Old Testament was made, which is now called the Septuagint. ¶ *In the parts of Libya.* Libya is a general name for Africa. It properly denoted the region which was near to Egypt; but the Greeks gave the name to all Africa. ¶ *About Cyrene.* This was a region about 500 miles west of Alexandria in Egypt. It was also called *Pentapolis*, because there were in it five celebrated cities. This country now belongs to *Tripoli*. Great numbers of Jews resided here. A Jew of this place, Simon by name, was compelled to bear our Saviour's cross after him to the place of crucifixion. Matt. xxvii. 32. Luke xxiii. 26. Some of the Cyrenians are mentioned among the earliest Christians. Acts xi. 20; xiii. 1. The language which they spoke is not certainly known. ¶ *Strangers of Rome.* This literally means "Romans dwelling, or tarrying," i. e. at Jerusalem. It may mean either that they were *permanently* fixed, or only *tarrying* at Jerusalem. οἱ ἐπιδη- μούντες Ῥωμαῖοι. They were doubtless Jews who had taken up their residence in Italy, and had come to Jerusalem to attend the great feasts. The language which they spoke was the Latin. Great numbers of Jews were at that time dwelling at Rome. Josephus says that there were eight synagogues there. The Jews are often mentioned by the Roman writers. There was a Jewish colony across the Tiber from Rome. When Judea was conquered, about sixty years before Christ, vast numbers of Jews were taken captive and carried to Rome. But they had much difficulty in managing them as slaves. They pertinaciously adhered to their religion, observed the Sabbath, and refused to join in the idolatrous rites of the Romans. Hence they were freed, and lived by themselves across the Tiber. ¶ *Jews.* Native born Jews, or descendants of Jewish families. ¶ *Proselytes.* Those who had been converted to the Jewish religion from among the Gentiles. The great zeal of the Jews to make proselytes is mentioned by our Saviour as one of the peculiar characteristics of the Pharisees. Matt. xxiii. 15. Some have supposed that the expression *Jews and proselytes* refers to the Romans only.

11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues^a the wonderful works of God.

a 1 Cor. 12, 10, 28.

But it is more probable that reference is made to *all* those that are mentioned. It has the appearance of a hurried enumeration; and the writer evidently mentioned them as they occurred to his mind, just as we would in giving a rapid account of so many different nations.

11. *Cretes.* *Crete*, now called *Candia*, is an island in the Mediterranean, about 200 miles in length and 50 in breadth, about 500 miles southwest of Constantinople, and about the same distance west of Syria or Palestine. The climate is mild and delightful, the sky unclouded and serene. By some this island is supposed to be the *Caphtor* of the Hebrews. Gen. x. 14. It is mentioned in the Acts as the place touched at by Paul. Acts xxvii. 7, 8. 14. This was the residence of Titus, who was left there by Paul to *set in order the things that were wanting*, &c. Titus i. 5. The Cretans among the Greeks were famous for deceit and falsehood. Titus i. 12, 13. The language spoken there was probably the Greek. ¶ *Arabians.* Arabia is the great peninsula which is bounded north by part of Syria, east by the Euphrates and the Persian gulf, south by the Indian ocean, and west by the Red sea. It is often mentioned in the Scriptures; and there were doubtless there many Jews. The language spoken there was the *Arabic*. ¶ *In our tongues.* The languages spoken by the apostles could not have been less than seven or eight, besides different dialects of the same languages. It is not certain that the Jews present from foreign nations spoke those languages perfectly; but they had doubtless so used them as to make them the common tongue in which they conversed. No miracle could be more decided than this. There was no way in which the apostles could *impose* on them, and make them *suppose* they spoke foreign languages, if they really did not; for these foreigners were abundantly able to determine that. It may be remarked that this miracle had most important effects besides that witnessed on the day of Pentecost. The gospel would be carried by those who were converted to all these places; and the way would be prepared for the labours of the apostles there. Accordingly, most of these places became afterwards celebrated by the establishment of Christian churches,

12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What^a meaneth this?

a c. 17. 20.

and the conversion of great multitudes to the Christian faith. ¶ *The wonderful works of God.* τὰ μεγαλῆα του Θεου. The great things of God; that is, the great things that God had done in the gift of his Son; in his raising him from the dead; in his miracles, ascension, &c. Comp. Luke i. 49. Ps. lxxi. 19; xxvi. 7; lxvi. 3; xcii. 5; civ. 24, &c.

12. *Were in doubt.* This expression, διηπύρουν, denotes a state of *hesitancy* or *anxiety* about an event. It is applied to those who are travelling, and are ignorant of the way, or who hesitate about the road. They were all astonished at this; they did not know how to understand it or explain it, until some of them supposed it was merely the effect of new wine.

13. *Others mocking, said.* The word rendered "mocking" means *to cavil, to deride*. It occurs in the New Testament but in one other place. Acts xvii. 32. "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked." This was an effect that was not confined to the day of Pentecost. There has been seldom a revival of religion, a remarkable manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit, that has not given occasion for profane mockery and merriment. One characteristic of wicked men is to deride those things which are done to promote their own welfare. Hence the Saviour himself was mocked; and the efforts of Christians to save others have been the subject of derision. *Derision*, and *mockery*, and *a jeer*, have been far more effectual in deterring men from becoming Christians than any attempts at sober argument. God will treat men as they treat him. Ps. xviii. 26. And hence he says to the wicked, "Because I have called and ye refused....but ye have set at nought my counsel, I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh." Prov. i. 24—26. ¶ *These men are full of new wine.* These men are drunk. In such times men will have some way of accounting for the effects of the gospel; and the way is commonly about as wise and rational as this. "To escape the absurdity of acknowledging their own ignorance, they adopted the theory that *strong drink can teach languages*."—Dr. McLelland. In modern times it has been usual to denominate such scenes fanaticism, or wild-

13 Others, mocking, said, These men are full of new wine.

14 But Peter, standing up with

fire, or enthusiasm. When men fail in argument, it is common to attempt to confute a doctrine or bring reproach upon a transaction by "giving it an ill name." Hence the names Puritan, Quaker, Methodist, &c. were at first given in derision, to account for some remarkable effect of religion on the world. Comp. Matt. xi. 19. John vii. 20; viii. 48. And thus men endeavour to trace revivals to ungoverned and heated passions; and they are regarded by many as the mere offspring of fanaticism. The friends of revivals should not be discouraged by this; but should remember that the very first revival of religion was by many supposed to be the effect of a drunken frolic. ¶ *New wine.* γλυκους. This word properly means the juice of the grape which distils before a pressure is applied, and called *must*. It was *sweet* wine; and hence the word in Greek meaning *sweet* was given to it. The ancients, it is said, had the art of preserving their new wine with the peculiar flavour before fermentation for a considerable time, and were in the habit of drinking it in the morning. See Horace, Sat. b. ii. iv. *Sweet wine*, which was probably the same as that mentioned here, is also mentioned in the Old Testament. Isa. xlix. 26. Amos ix. 13.

14. *But Peter.* This was in accordance with the natural temperament of Peter. He was bold, forward, ardent; and he rose now to defend the apostles of Jesus Christ, and Christ himself, from an injurious charge. Not daunted by ridicule or opposition, he felt that now was the time for preaching the gospel to the crowd that had been assembled by curiosity. No ridicule should deter Christians from an honest avowal of their opinions, and a defence of the operations of the Holy Spirit. ¶ *With the eleven.* Matthias was now one of the apostles, and now appeared as one of the witnesses for the truth. They probably all arose, and took part in the discourse. Possibly Peter began to discourse, and either all spoke together in different languages, or one succeeded another. ¶ *Ye men of Judea.* Men who are Jews; that is, Jews by birth. The original does not mean that they were permanent dwellers in Judea, but that they were *Jews*, of Jewish families. Literally, "men, Jews." ¶ *And all ye that dwell, &c.* All others besides

the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and heard to my words :

native-born Jews, whether proselytes or strangers, who were abiding at Jerusalem. This comprised, of course, the whole assembly, and was a respectful and conciliatory introduction to his discourse. Though they had mocked them, yet he treated them with respect, and did not render railing for railing (1 Pet. iii. 9), but sought to *convince* them of their error. ¶ *Be this known, &c.* Peter did not intimate that this was a doubtful matter, or one that could not be explained. His address was respectful, yet firm. He proceeded calmly to *show* them their error. When the enemies of religion deride us or the gospel, we should answer them kindly and respectfully, yet firmly. We should *reason* with them coolly, and convince them of their error. Prov. xv. 1. In this case Peter acted on the principle which he afterwards enjoined on all. 1 Pet. iii. 15, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." The design of Peter was to *vindicate* the conduct of the apostles from the reproach of intoxication, to show that this could be no other than the work of God; and to make an application of the truth to his hearers. This he did, (1.) By showing that this could not be reasonably supposed to be the effect of new wine, ver. 15. (2.) That it had been expressly predicted in the writings of the Jewish prophets, ver. 16—21. (3.) By a calm argument, proving the resurrection and ascension of Christ, and showing that this also was in accordance with the Jewish Scriptures, ver. 22—35. We are not to suppose that this was the *whole* of Peter's discourse, but that these were the topics on which he insisted, and the main points of his argument.

15. *For these are not drunken, &c.* The word *these* here includes Peter himself, as well as the others. The charge doubtless extended to all. ¶ *The third hour of the day.* The Jews divided their day into twelve equal parts, reckoning from sunrise to sunset. Of course the hours were longer in the summer than in the winter. The *third* hour would answer to our nine o'clock in the morning. The reasons why it was so improbable that they should be drunk at that time, were the following

15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing ^a it is *but* the third hour of the day.

16 But this is that which was ^b spoken by the prophet Joel :

a 1 Th. 5.7. b Joel 2.23,32.

(1.) It was the hour of morning worship, or sacrifice. It was highly improbable, that at that early hour they would be intoxicated. (2.) It was not usual for even drunkards to become drunk in the day-time. 1 Thess. v. 7. "They that be drunken, are drunken in the night." (3.) The charge was, that they had become drunk with wine. Ardent spirits, or alcohol, that curse of *our* times, was unknown. It was very improbable that so much of the weak wine commonly used in Judea, should have been taken at that early hour as to produce intoxication. (4.) It was a regular practice with the Jews, not to eat or drink *any* thing until after the third hour of the day, especially on the Sabbath, and on all festival occasions. Sometimes this abstinence was maintained until noon. So universal was this custom, that the apostle could appeal to it with confidence, as a full refutation of the charge of drunkenness at that hour. Even the intemperate were not accustomed to drink before that hour. The following testimonies on this subject from Jewish writers, are from Lightfoot. "This was the custom of pious people in ancient times, that each one should offer his morning prayers with additions in the synagogue, and then return home and take refreshment." *Maimonides, Shabb. ch. 30.* "They remained in the synagogue until the sixth hour and a half, and then each one offered the prayer of the Mincha, before he returned home, and then he ate." "The fourth is the hour of repast, when all eat." One of the Jewish writers says, that the difference between thieves and honest men might be known by the fact that the *former* might be seen in the morning at the fourth hour, eating and sleeping, and holding a cup in his hand. But for those who made pretensions to religion, as the apostles did, such a thing was altogether improbable.

16. *This is that.* This is the *fulfilment* of that, or this was predicted. This was the *second* part of Peter's argument, to show that this was in accordance with the predictions in their own Scriptures. ¶ *By the prophet Joel.* Joel ii. 23—31. This is not quoted *literally*, either from the Hebrew or the Septuagint. The substance however is preserved.

17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, (saith God,) I will

pour out ^a of my Spirit upon all

^a Is. 44.3. Eze. 36.27.

17. *It shall come to pass.* It shall happen, or shall occur. ¶ *In the last days.* Heb. Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic, *after these things, or afterwards.* The expression *the last days*, however, occurs frequently in the Old Testament. Gen. xlix. 1. Jacob called his sons, that he might tell them what should happen to them *in the last days*, i. e. in future times. Heb. *in after times.* Micah iv. 1. "*In the last days* (Heb. in after times) the mountain of the Lord's house," &c. Isa. ii. 2, "*In the last days* the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the tops of the mountains," &c. The expression then properly denoted the *future times* in general. But, as the coming of the Messiah was to the eye of a Jew the most important event in the coming ages, the great, glorious, and crowning scene in all that vast futurity, the phrase came to be regarded as properly expressive of that. And they spoke of future times, and of the last times, as the glad period which should be crowned and honoured with the presence and triumphs of the Messiah. It stood in opposition to the usual denomination of earlier times. It was a phrase in contrast with the days of the patriarch, the kings, the prophets, &c. *The last days*, or the closing period of the world, were the days of the Messiah. It does not appear from this, and it certainly is not implied in the expression, that they supposed the world would then come to an end. Their views were just the contrary. They anticipated a long and glorious time, under the dominion of the Messiah, and to this expectation they were led by the promise that his kingdom should be for ever; that of the increase of his government there should be no end, &c. This expression was understood by the writers of the New Testament as referring undoubtedly to the times of the gospel. And hence they often used it as denoting that the time of the expected Messiah had come, but *not* to imply that the world was drawing near to an end. Heb. i. 2, "God hath spoken in these last days by his Son." 1 Pet. i. 20, "Was manifested in these last times for you." 2 Pet. iii. 3. 1 Pet. i. 5. 1 John ii. 18, "Little children it is the last time," &c. Jude 18. The expression *the last day*, is applied by our Saviour to the resurrection and the day of judgment. John vi. 39, 40, 44, 45; xi. 24; xii. 48. Here the expression means simply *in those future times, when the Messiah*

shall have come. ¶ *I will pour out of my Spirit.* The expression in Hebrew is, "I will pour out my Spirit." The word *pour* is commonly applied to *water*, or to *blood*, to *pour it out*, or to *shed it*, Isa. lvii. 6; to *tears*, to *pour them out*, i. e. to *weep*, &c. Ps. xlii. 5. 1 Sam. i. 15. It is applied to *water*, to *wine*, or to *blood*, in the New Testament. Matt. ix. 17. Rev. xvi. 1. Acts xxii. 20. "The blood of thy martyr Stephen *was shed*." It conveys also the idea of *communicating largely*, or *freely*, as *water* is poured freely from a fountain. Titus iii. 5, 6, "The renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he *shed on us abundantly*," Thus Job xxxvi. 27, "They (the clouds) *pour down rain* according to the vapour thereof." Isa. xlv. 3, "I will *pour water on him that is thirsty*." xv. 8, "Let the skies *pour down righteousness*." Mal. iii. 10, "I will *pour you out a blessing*." It is also applied to *fury* and *anger*, when God intends to say that he will not spare, but will signally punish. Ps. lxi. 24. Jer. x. 25. It is not unfrequently applied to the *Spirit*. Prov. i. 23. Isa. xlv. 3. Zach. xii. 10. And then it means that he will bestow large measures of spiritual influences. As the *Spirit* renews and sanctifies men, so to *pour out the Spirit* is to grant freely his influences to renew and sanctify the soul. ¶ *My Spirit.* The *Spirit* here denotes the third person of the Trinity, promised by the Saviour, and sent to finish his work, and apply it to men. The Holy Spirit is regarded as the source, or *conveyer* of all the blessings which Christians experience. Hence he renews the heart. John iii. 5, 6. He is the source of all proper feelings and principles in Christians, or he produces the Christian graces. Gal. v. 22—25. Titus iii. 5—7. The spread and success of the gospel is attributed to him. Isa. xxxii. 15, 16. Miraculous gifts are traced to him; especially the various gifts with which the early Christians were endowed. 1 Cor. xii. 4—10. The promise that he would *pour out his Spirit*, means that he would, in the time of the Messiah, impart a large measure of those influences, which it was his peculiar province to communicate to men. A part of them were communicated on the day of Pentecost, in the miraculous endowment of the power of speaking foreign languages, in the wisdom of the apostles, and in the conversion of the three thousand. ¶ *Upon all flesh.* The word *flesh* here means *persons*,

flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your

young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

or men. See Note, Rom. i. 3. The word *all* here does not mean every individual, but every *class* or *rank* of men. It is to be limited to the cases specified immediately. The influences were not to be confined to any class, but to be communicated to all *kinds* of persons, old men, youth, servants, &c. Comp. 1 Tim. ii. 1—4. ¶ *And your sons and your daughters.* Your children. It would seem, however, that females shared in the remarkable influences of the Holy Spirit. Philip, the Evangelist, had four daughters which did prophesy. Acts xxi. 9. It is probable also that the females of the church of Corinth partook of this gift, though they were forbidden to exercise it in public. 1 Cor. xiv. 34. The office of prophesying, whatever was meant by that, was not confined to the *men* among the Jews. Ex. xv. 20, "Miriam, the prophetess, took a timbrel," &c. Judg. iv. 4, "Deborah, a prophetess, judged Israel." 2 Kings xxii. 14. See also Luke ii. 36, "There was one Anna, a prophetess," &c. ¶ *Shall prophesy.* The word *prophesy* is used in a great variety of senses. (1.) It means to *predict*, or *foretell* future events. Matt. xi. 13; xv. 7. (2.) To divine, to conjecture, to declare as a prophet might. Matt. xxvi. 68, "Prophesy who smote thee." (3.) To celebrate the praises of God, being under a divine influence. Luke i. 67. This seems to have been a considerable part of the employment in the ancient schools of the prophets. 1 Sam. x. 5; xix. 20; xxx. 15. (4.) To *teach*—as no small part of the office of the prophets was to teach the doctrines of religion. Matt. vii. 22, "Have we not prophesied in thy name?" (5.) It denotes then, in general, to *speak under a divine influence*, whether in foretelling future events; in celebrating the praises of God; in instructing others in the duties of religion, or in *speaking foreign languages under that influence*. In this last sense, the word is used in the New Testament, to denote those who were miraculously endowed with the power of speaking foreign languages. Acts xix. 6. The word is also used to denote *teaching*, or speaking in intelligible language, in *opposition* to speaking a foreign tongue. 1 Cor. xiv. 1—5. In this place it means that they should speak under a divine influence, and is *especially* applied to the power of speaking in a foreign tongue. ¶ *Your young men shall see visions.* The will of God in former times was communicated to the prophets

in various ways. One was by *visions*, and hence one of the most usual names of the prophets was *seers*. The name *seer* was first given to that class of men, and was superseded by the name *prophet*. 1 Sam. ix. 9, "He that is now called a prophet was before time called a *Seer*." ix. 11. 18, 19. 2 Sam. xxiv. 2; xxix. 29, &c. This name was given from the *manner* in which the divine will was communicated, which seems to have been by throwing the prophet into an ecstasy, and then by causing the *vision*, or the *appearance* of the objects or events to pass before the mind. The prophet looked upon the passing scene, the often splendid diorama as it actually occurred, and recorded it as it appeared to his mind. Hence he recorded rather the *succession* of images than the *times* in which they would occur. These visions occurred sometimes when they were *asleep*, and sometimes during a prophetic ecstasy. Dan. ii. 28; vii. 1, 2, 15; viii. 2. Ezek. xi. 24. Gen. xv. 1. Num. xii. 6. Job iv. 13; vii. 14. Ezek. i. 1; viii. 3. Often the prophet seemed to be transferred, or translated to another place from where he was; and the scene in a distant *land* or *age* passed before the mind. Ezek. viii. 3; xl. 2; xi. 24. Dan. viii. 2. In this case the distant scene or time passed before the prophet, and he recorded it as it appeared to him. That this did not cease before the times of the gospel is evident. Acts ix. 10, "To Ananias said the Lord *in a vision*," &c. 12, "And hath seen (i. e. *Paul*) *in a vision*, a man named Ananias," &c. i. e. Paul hath seen Ananias represented to him, though absent; he has had an image of him coming in to him. Acts x. 3, Cornelius "saw in a vision evidently an angel of God coming to him," &c. This was one of the modes by which in former times God made known his will; and the language of the Jews came to express a revelation in this manner. Though there were strictly no *visions* on the day of Pentecost, yet that was one scene under the great economy of the Messiah, under which God would make known his will in a manner as clear as he did to the ancient Jews. ¶ *Your old men shall dream dreams.* The will of God in former times was made known often in this manner; and there are several instances recorded in which it was done under the gospel. God informed Abimelech in a dream, that Sarah was the wife of Abraham. Gen. xx. 3. He spoke to

18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out, in those days, of my Spirit; and^a they shall prophesy:

^a c.21.4,9,10. 1Cor.12.10.

Jacob in a dream, Gen. xxxi. 11; to Laban, xxxi. 24; to Joseph, xxxvii. 5; to the butler and baker, xl. 5; to Pharaoh, xli. 1—7; to Solomon, 1 Kings iii. 5; to Daniel, Dan. ii. 3; vii. 1. It was prophesied by Moses that in this way God would make known his will. Num. xii. 6. It occurred even in the times of the gospel. Matt. i. 20. Joseph was warned in a dream. ii. 12, 13. 19. 22. Pilate's wife was also troubled in this manner about the conduct of the Jews to Christ. Matt. xxvii. 19. As this was one way in which the will of God was made known formerly to men, so the expression here denotes simply that his will should be made known; that it should be one characteristic of the times of the gospel that God would reveal himself to man. The ancients probably had some mode of determining whether their *dreams* were divine communications, or whether they were, as they are now, the mere erratic wanderings of the mind when unrestrained and unchecked by the will. At present no confidence is to be put in dreams.

18. *And on my servants.* The Hebrew in Joel is "upon the servants." The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, however, render it "on my servants." In Joel, the prophet would seem to be enumerating the different conditions and ranks of society. The influences of the Spirit would be confined to no class; they would descend on old and young, and even on servants and handmaids. So the Chaldee Paraphrase understood it. But the Septuagint and Peter evidently understood it in the sense of *servants of God*; as the worshippers of God are often called *servants* in the Scriptures. See Rom. i. 1. It is possible, however, that the Hebrew intended to refer to the servants of God: It is not "upon your servants," &c. as in the former expression, "*your sons*," &c.; but the form is changed, "upon *servants* and handmaids." The language, therefore, will admit the construction of the Septuagint and of Peter; and it was this variation in the Hebrew which suggested, doubtless, the mention of "*my servants*," &c. instead of *your servants*. † *And handmaids.* Female servants. The name is several times given to pious women. Ps. lxxxvi. 16; cxvi. 16. Luke i. 38. 48. The meaning of this verse does not

19 And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke:

materially differ from the former. In the times of the gospel, those who were brought under its influence should be remarkably endowed with ability to declare the will of God.

19, 20. *I will show wonders.* Literally, "I will give signs." δῶσω τίγματα. The word in the Hebrew, מופתים, *mophethim*, means properly *prodigies*; wonderful occurrences; miracles wrought by God or his messengers. Exod. iv. 21; vii. 3. 9; xi. 9. Deut. iii. 24, &c. It is the common word to denote a *miracle*, in the Old Testament. Here it means, however, a *portentous appearance*, a *prodigy*, a *remarkable occurrence*. It is commonly joined in the New Testament with the word *signs*; "signs and wonders." Matt. xxiv. 24. Mark xiii. 22. John iv. 48. In these places it does not of necessity mean *miracles*, but unusual and remarkable appearances. Here it is fixed to mean great and striking changes in the sky, the sun, moon, &c. The Hebrew is, "I will give signs in the heaven, and upon the earth." Peter has quoted it according to the sense, and not according to the letter. The Septuagint is here a literal translation of the Hebrew; and this is one of the instances where the New Testament writers did not quote from either.

Much of the difficulty of interpreting these verses consists in fixing the proper meaning to the expression "that great and notable day of the Lord." If it be limited to the day of Pentecost, it is certain that no such events occurred at that time. But there is, it is believed, no propriety in confining it to that time. The description here pertains to "the last days" (ver. 17), i. e. to the *whole* of that period of duration, however long, which was known by the prophets as *the last times*. That period might be extended through many centuries; and *during* that period *all* these events would take place. The *day of the Lord* is the day when God shall manifest himself in a peculiar manner; a day when he shall so strikingly be seen in his wonders and his judgments, that it may be called *his day*. Thus it is applied to the day of judgment, as the *day of the Son of man*; the day in which he will be the great attractive object, and will be signally glorified. Luke xvii. 24. 1 Thess. v. 2. Phil. i. 6. 2 Pet. iii. 12. If,

20 The "sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood,

a Mar.13.24. 2Pet.3.7,10.

as I suppose, "that notable day of the Lord" here denotes that future time when God shall manifest himself in judgment, then we are not to suppose that Peter meant to say that these "wonders" should take place on the day of Pentecost, or had their fulfilment then, *but would occur under that indefinite period called "the last days," the days of the Messiah, and BEFORE that period was closed by the great day of the Lord.* The gift of tongues was a *partial* fulfilment of the general prophecy pertaining to those times. And as the prophecy was thus *partially* fulfilled, it was a pledge that it would be *entirely*; and thus there was laid a foundation for the necessity of repentance, and for calling on the Lord in order to be saved. ¶ *Blood.* Blood is commonly used as an emblem of slaughter, or of battle. ¶ *Fire.* Fire is also an image of war, or the conflagration of towns and dwellings in time of war. ¶ *Vapour of smoke.* The word *vapour*, ἁτμός, means commonly an exhalation from the earth, &c. easily moved from one place to another. Here it means (Heb. Joel) *rising columns, or pillars of smoke*; and is another image of the calamities of war, the smoke rising from burning towns. It has almost always been customary in war to burn the towns of an enemy, and to render him as helpless as possible. Hence the calamities denoted here are those *represented* by such scenes. To what *particular* scenes there is reference here, it may be impossible now to say. It may be remarked, however, that scenes of this kind occurred before the destruction of Jerusalem, and there is a striking resemblance between the description in Joel, and that by which our Saviour foretells the destruction of Jerusalem. See Notes on Matt. xxiv. 21—21.

20. *The sun shall be turned into darkness.* See Note, Matt. xxiv. 29. The same images used here with reference to the sun and moon, are used also there. They occur not unfrequently. Mark xiii. 24. 2 Pet. iii. 7—10. The shining of the sun is an emblem of prosperity; the withdrawing, or eclipse, or setting of the sun is an emblem of calamity, and is often thus used in the Scriptures. Isa. lx. 20. Jer. xv. 9. Ezek. xxxii. 7. Amos viii. 9. Rev. vi. 12; viii. 12; ix. 2; xvi. 8. To say that the sun is darkened, or turned

before that great and notable day of the Lord come:

into darkness, is an image of calamity, and especially of the calamities of war; when the smoke of burning cities rises to heaven, and obscures his light. This is not, therefore, to be taken literally, nor does it afford any indication of what will be at the end of the world in regard to the sun. ¶ *The moon into blood.* The word *blood* here means that obscure, sanguinary colour which the moon has when the atmosphere is filled with smoke and vapour; and especially the lurid and alarming appearance which it assumes when smoke and flames are thrown up by earthquakes and fiery eruptions. Rev. vi. 12, "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood." Rev. viii. 8. In this place it denotes great calamities. The figures used are indicative of wars, and conflagrations, and unusual prodigies of earthquakes. As these things are (Matt. xxiv.) applied to the destruction of Jerusalem; as they actually occurred previous to that event (see Notes, Matt. xxiv.); it may be supposed that the prophecy in Joel had an immediate reference to that. The meaning of the quotation by Peter in this place, therefore, is, that what occurred on the day of Pentecost, *was the beginning of the series of wonders that was to take place during the times of the Messiah.* It is not intimated that those scenes were to close, or to be exhausted in that age. They may precede that great day of the Lord which is yet to come in view of the whole earth. ¶ *That great and notable day of the Lord.* This is called the *great day of the Lord* because on that day he will be signally manifested, more impressively and strikingly than on other times. The word *notable*, ἐπιφανής, means signal, illustrious, distinguished. In Joel the word is *terrible, or fearful*; a word applicable to days of calamity, and trial, and judgment. The Greek word here rendered *notable*, is also in the Septuagint frequently used to denote calamity, or times of judgment. Deut. x. 31. 2 Sam. vii. 23. This will apply to *any day* in which God signally manifests himself; but particularly to a day when he shall come forth to punish men, as at the destruction of Jerusalem, or at the day of judgment. The meaning is, that those wonders should take place *before* that

21 And it shall come to pass, *that*

a Ps. 86.5. Ro. 10.13. 1 Cor. 1.2. He. 4.16.

distinguished day should arrive when God should come forth in judgment.

21. *Whosoever shall call.* In the midst of these wonders and dangers, whosoever should call on the Lord should be delivered. (Joel). The name of the Lord is the same as the Lord himself. It is a Hebraism, signifying to call on the Lord. Ps. lxxix. 6. Zech. xiii. 9. ¶ *Shall be saved.* In Hebrew, shall be delivered, i. e. from impending calamities. When they threaten, and God is coming forth to judge them, it shall be that those who are characterized as those who call on the Lord, shall be delivered. This is equally true at all times. It is remarkable that no Christians perished in the siege of Jerusalem. Though more than a million of Jews perished, yet the followers of Christ who were there, having been warned by him, when they saw the signs of the Romans approaching, withdrew to *Ælia*, and were preserved. So it shall be in the day of judgment. All whose character it has been that *they called on God*, will then be saved. While the wicked shall then call on the rocks and the mountains to shelter them from the Lord, those who have invoked his *favour and mercy* shall then find deliverance. The use which Peter makes of this passage is this: Calamities were about to come; the day of judgment was approaching; they were passing through *the last days* of the earth's history; and therefore it became them to call on the name of the Lord, and to obtain deliverance from the dangers which impended over the guilty. There can be little doubt that Peter intended to apply this to the Messiah, and that by the name of the Lord he meant the Lord Jesus. See 1 Cor. i. 2. Paul makes the same use of the passage, expressly applying it to the Lord Jesus Christ. Rom. x. 13, 14. In Joel, the word translated *Lord* is *JEHOVAH*, the incommunicable and peculiar name of God; and the use of the passage before us in the New Testament, shows how the apostles regarded the Lord Jesus Christ; and proves that they had no hesitation in applying to him names and attributes which could belong to no one but God.

This verse teaches us, 1. That in prospect of the judgments of God which are to come, we should make preparation. We shall be called to pass through the closing scene of this earth; the time when

whosoever ^a shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved.

the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, and when the great day of the Lord shall come. 2. It is easy to be saved. All that God requires of us is to call upon him, to pray to him, to ask him, and he will answer and save. If men will not do so easy a thing as to call on God, and ask him for salvation, it is obviously proper that they should be cast off. The terms of salvation could not be made plainer or easier. The offer is wide, free, universal, and there is no obstacle but what exists in the heart of the sinner. And from this part of Peter's vindication of the scene on the day of Pentecost, we may learn also, 1. That revivals of religion are to be expected as a part of the history of the Christian church. He speaks of God's pouring out his Spirit, &c. as what was to take place *in the last days*, i. e. in the indefinite and large tract of time which was to come under the administration of the Messiah. His remarks are by no means limited to the day of Pentecost. They are as applicable to future periods as to that time; and we are to expect it *as a part of Christian history*, that the Holy Spirit will be sent down to awaken and convert men. 2. This will also vindicate revivals from all the charges which have ever been brought against them. All the objections of irregularity, extravagance, wildfire, enthusiasm, disorder, &c. which have been alleged against revivals in modern times, *might* have been brought with equal propriety against the scene on the day of Pentecost. Yet an apostle showed that that was in accordance with the predictions of the Old Testament, and was an undoubted work of the Holy Spirit. If *that* work could be vindicated, then modern revivals may be. If that was really liable to no objections on these accounts, then modern works of grace should not be objected to for the same things. And if that excited deep interest in the apostles; if they felt deep concern to vindicate it from the charge brought against it, then Christians and Christian ministers now should feel similar solicitude to defend revivals, and not be found among their revilers, their calumniators, or their foes. There will be enemies enough of the work of the Holy Spirit without the aid of professed Christians; and that man possesses no enviable feelings or character, who is found with the enemies of God and his Christ, in oppos-

22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles ^a and wonders and signs,

a Jno. 14.10, 11. He. 2.4.

ing the mighty work of the Holy Spirit on the human heart.

22: *Ye men of Israel.* Descendants of Israel, or Jacob, i. e. Jews. Peter proceeds now to the third part of his argument, to show that Jesus Christ had been raised up; and that the scene which had occurred was in accordance with his promise, was proof of his resurrection, and of his exaltation to be the Messiah; and that, therefore, they should repent for their great sin in having put their own Messiah to death. ¶ *A man approved of God.* A man who was shown or demonstrated to have the approbation of God, or to have been sent by him. ¶ *By miracles, and wonders, and signs.* The first of these words properly means the displays of power which Jesus made; the second, the unusual or remarkable events which attended him; the third, the signs or proofs that he was from God. Together, they denote the array or series of remarkable works—raising the dead, healing the sick, &c. which showed that Jesus was sent from God. The proof which they furnished that he was from God was this, that God would not confer such power on an impostor, and that therefore he was what he pretended to be. ¶ *Which God did by him.* The Lord Jesus himself often traced his power to do these things to his commission from the Father; but he did it in such a way as to show that he was closely united to him. John v. 19. 30. Peter here says that God did these works by Jesus Christ, to show that Jesus was truly sent by him, and that therefore he had the seal and attestation of God. The same thing Jesus himself said. John v. 36, "The work which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." The great works which God has wrought in creation, as well as in redemption, he is represented as having done by his Son. Heb. i. 2, "By whom also he made the worlds." John i. 3. Col. i. 15—19. ¶ *In the midst of you.* In your own land. It is also probable that many of the persons present had been witnesses of his miracles. ¶ *As ye yourselves also know.* They knew it either by having witnessed them, or by the evidence which every where abounded of the truth that he had

which God did, by him, in the midst of you, as ye ^b yourselves also know:

23 Him, being ^c delivered by the

b Jno. 15.24. c Lu. 22.22; 24.44. c. 3.18.

wrought them. The Jews, even in the time of Christ, did not dare to call his miracles in question. John xv. 24. While they admitted the miracle, they attempted to trace it to the influence of Beelzebub. Matt. ix. 34. Mark iii. 22. So decided and numerous were the miracles of Jesus, that Peter here appeals to them as having been known by the Jews themselves to have been performed, and with a confidence that even they could not deny it. On this he proceeds to rear his argument for the truth of his Messiahship.

23: *Him, being delivered.* ἔκδοτον. This word, *delivered*, is used commonly of those who are surrendered or delivered into the hands of enemies or adversaries. It means that Jesus was surrendered, or given up to his enemies by those who should have been his protectors. Thus he was delivered to the chief-priests. Mark x. 33. Pilate released Barabbas, and delivered Jesus to their will, Mark xv. 15. Luke xxiii. 25; he was delivered unto the Gentiles, Luke xviii. 32; the chief-priests delivered him to Pilate, Matt. xxvii. 2; and Pilate delivered him to be crucified, Matt. xxvii. 26. John xix. 16. In this manner was the death of Jesus accomplished, by being surrendered from one tribunal to another, and one demand of his countrymen to another, until they succeeded in procuring his death. It may also be implied here that he was given or surrendered by God to the hands of men. Thus he is represented to have been given by God. John iii. 16. 1 John iv. 9, 10. The Syriac translates this, "Him, who was destined to this by the foreknowledge and will of God, you delivered into the hands of wicked men," &c. The Arabic, "Him, delivered to you by the hands of the wicked, you received, and after you had mocked him, you slew him." ¶ *By the determinate counsel.* The word translated *determinate*, τὴν ὁρισμένην, means, properly, that which is defined, marked out, or bounded; as, to mark out or define the boundary of a field, &c. See Rom. i. 1. 4. In Acts x. 42, it is translated *ordained* of God; denoting his purpose that it should be so, i. e. that Jesus should be the judge of quick and dead. Luke xxii. 22, "The Son of man goeth as it is determined of him," i. e. as God has purposed or determined beforehand that he should go.

determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye ^a have taken, and

^a c. 5.30.

Acts xi. 29, "The disciples . . . *determined* to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea," i. e. they *resolved* or *purposed* beforehand to do it. Acts xvii. 26, "God . . . *hath determined* the times before appointed and fixed," &c. In all these places there is the idea of a *purpose*, or *intention*, or *plan* implying *intention*, and marking out or fixing the boundaries to some future action or event. The word implies that the death of Jesus was *resolved on* by God before it took place. And this truth is established by all the predictions made in the Old Testament, and by the Saviour himself. God was not *compelled* to give up his Son. There was no *claim* on him for it. And he had a right, therefore, to determine when and how it should be done. The fact, moreover, that this was *predicted*, shows that it was fixed or resolved on. No event can be *foretold*, evidently, unless it be *certain* that it will take place. The event, therefore, must in some way be fixed or resolved on beforehand. ¶ *Counsel*. βουλῇ. This word properly denotes purpose, decree, *will*. It expresses the act of the mind in *willing*, or the purpose or design which is formed. Here it means the purpose or will of God; it was his plan or decree that Jesus should be delivered. Acts iv. 28, "For to do whatsoever thy hand and *thy counsel* (ἡ βουλὴ σου) determined before to be done." Eph. i. 11, "Who worketh all things after the *counsel* of his own will." Heb. vi. 17, "God, willing . . . to show . . . the immutability of his *counsel*." See Acts xx. 27. 1 Cor. iv. 5. Luke xxiii. 51. The word here, therefore, proves that Jesus was delivered by the deliberate purpose of God; that it was according to his previous intention and design. The reason why this was insisted on by Peter, was, that he might convince the Jews that Jesus was not delivered by *weakness*, or because he was unable to rescue himself. Such an opinion would have been inconsistent with the belief that he was the Messiah. It was important, then, to assert the *dignity* of Jesus, and to show that his death was in accordance with the fixed design of God; and therefore, that it did not interfere in the least with his claims to be the Messiah. The same thing our Saviour has himself expressly affirmed. John xix. 10, 11; x. 18. Matt. xxvi. 53. ¶ *Foreknowledge*. This word denotes the seeing

^b by wicked hands have crucified and slain :

^b Matt. 27.

beforehand of an event yet to take place. It implies, 1. Omniscience; and 2. That the event is fixed and certain. To foresee a contingent event, that is, to foresee that an event will take place, when it may or may not take place, is an absurdity. Foreknowledge, therefore, implies that for some reason the event *will certainly* take place. What that reason is, the word itself does not determine. As, however, *God* is represented in the Scriptures as purposing or determining future events; as they could not be *foreseen* by him unless he had so determined, so the word sometimes is used in the sense of determining beforehand, or as synonymous with decreeing. Rom. viii. 29; xi. 2. In this place the word is used to denote that the delivering up of Jesus was something more than a bare or naked decree. It implies that God did it according to his *foresight* of what would be the best time, and place, and manner of its being done. It was not the result merely of *will*; it was will directed by a wise foreknowledge of what would be best. And this is the case with all the decrees of God. It follows from this, that the conduct of the Jews was foreknown. God was not disappointed in any thing respecting their treatment of his Son. Nor will he be disappointed in any of the doings of men. Notwithstanding the wickedness of the world, his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. Isa. xlv. 10. ¶ *Ye have taken*. See Matt. xxvi. 57. *Ye Jews* have taken. It is possible that some were present on this occasion who had been personally concerned in taking Jesus; and many who had joined in the cry, "Crucify him." Luke xxiii. 18—21. It was, at any rate, the act of the *Jewish people* by which this had been done. This was a striking instance of the fidelity of that preaching which says, as Nathan did to David, "Thou art the man!" Peter, once so timid that he denied his Lord, now charged this atrocious crime on his countrymen, regardless of their anger and his own danger. He did not deal in *general* accusations, but brought the charges home, and declared that *they* were the men who had been concerned in this amazing crime. No preaching can be successful that does not charge on men their personal guilt; and that does not fearlessly proclaim their ruin and danger. ¶ *With wicked hands*. Greek, "through

or by the hands of the lawless, or wicked." This refers, doubtless, to Pilate and the Roman soldiers, through whose instrumentality this had been done. The reasons for supposing that this is the true interpretation of the passage are these: (1.) The Jews had not the power of inflicting death themselves. (2.) The term used here, *wicked*, *ἁνέμουν*, is not applicable to the *Jews*, but to the Romans. It properly means *lawless*, or those who had not the law, and is often applied to the heathen. Rom. ii. 12. 14. 1 Cor. ix. 21. (3.) The punishment which was inflicted was a Roman punishment. (4.) It was a matter of fact, that the Jews, though they had *condemned* him, yet had not put him to death themselves, but had demanded it of the Romans. But though they had employed the Romans to do it, still they were the prime movers in the deed; they had plotted, and compassed, and demanded his death; and they were therefore not the less guilty. The maxim of the common law, and of common sense, is, "he who does a deed by the instrumentality of another, is responsible for it." It was from no merit of the Jews that they had not put him to death themselves. It was simply because the power was taken away from them. ¶ *Have crucified*. Greek, "having affixed him to the cross, ye have put him to death." Peter here charges the crime fully on them. Their guilt was not diminished because they had employed others to do it.—From this we may remark, 1. That this was one of the most amazing and awful crimes that could be charged on any men. It was malice, and treason, and hatred, and murder combined. Nor was it any common murder. It was *their own Messiah* whom they had put to death; the hope of their fathers; he who had been long promised by God, and the prospect of whose coming had so long cheered and animated the nation. They had now imbrued their hands in his blood, and stood charged with the awful crime of having murdered the Prince of Peace. 2. It is no mitigation of guilt that we do it by the instrumentality of others. It is often, if not always, a deepening and extending of the crime. 3. We have here a striking and clear instance of the doctrine that the decrees of God do not interfere with the free agency of men. This event was certainly *determined* beforehand. Nothing is clearer than this. It is here expressly asserted; and it had been foretold with undeviating certainty by the prophets. God had, for wise and gracious purposes, purposed or decreed in his own mind that

his Son should die at the time, and in the manner in which he did; for all the circumstances of his *death*, as well as of his birth and his life, were foretold. And yet, in this the Jews and the Romans never supposed or alleged that they were compelled or cramped in what they did. *They did what they chose*. If in this case the decrees of God were not inconsistent with human freedom, neither can they be in any case. Between those decrees and the freedom of man there is no inconsistency, unless it could be shown—what never can be—that God *compels* men to act contrary to their own will. In that case there could be no freedom. But that is *not* the case with regard to the decrees of God. An act is what it is *in itself*; it can be contemplated and measured by itself. That it was *foreseen*, *foreknown*, or *purposed*, does not alter its nature any more than it does that it be *remembered* after it is performed. The *memory* of what we have done does not destroy our freedom. *Our own purposes* in relation to our conduct do not destroy our freedom; nor can the purposes or designs of any other being violate one free moral action, unless he *compels* us to do a thing against our will. 4. We have here a proof that the decree of God does not take away the *moral character* of an action. It does not prove that an action is *innocent* if it is shown that it is a part of the wise plan of God to permit it. Never was there a more atrocious *crime* than the crucifixion of the Son of God. And yet it was determined on in the divine counsels. So with all the deeds of human guilt. The purpose of God to *permit* them does not destroy their nature or make them innocent. They are what they are in themselves. The purpose of God does not change their character; and if it is *right* to punish them *in fact*, they will be punished. If it is right for God to punish them, it was right to *resolve* to do it. And the sinner must answer for *his sins*, not for the plans of his Maker; nor can he take shelter in the day of wrath against *what he deserves* in the plea that God has determined future events. If any men could have done it, it would have been those whom Peter addressed; yet neither he nor they felt that their guilt was in the least diminished by the fact that Jesus was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." 5. If this event was predetermined; if that act of amazing wickedness, when the Son of God was put to death, was fixed by the determinate counsel of God, then all the events leading to it, and the circumstances at-

24 Whom ^a God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible ^b that

^a Lu. 24. c. 13. 30 34. 1 Cor. 6. 14. Ep. 1. 20. Col. 2. 12. 1 Th. 1. 10. Heb. 13. 20. 1 Pet. 1. 21. ^b Jno. 10. 18.

tending it, were also a part of the decree. The one could not be determined without the other. 6. If *that* event was determined, then others may be also consistently with human freedom and responsibility. There can be no deed of wickedness that shall surpass that of crucifying the Son of God. And if the acts of his murderers were a part of the wise counsel of God, then on the same principle are we to suppose that all events are under his direction, and ordered by a purpose infinitely wise and good. 7. If the Jews could not take shelter from the charge of wickedness under the plea that it was foreordained, then no sinners can do it. This was as clear a case as can ever occur; and yet the apostle did not intimate that an excuse or mitigation for their sin could be plead from this cause. This case, therefore, meets *all* the excuses of sinners from this plea, and *proves* that those excuses will not avail them or save them in the day of judgment.

24. Whom God hath raised up. This was the main point, in this part of his argument, which Peter wished to establish. He could not but admit that the Messiah had been in an ignominious manner put to death. But he now shows them that God had also raised him up; had thus given his attestation to his doctrine; and had sent down his Spirit according to the promise which the Lord Jesus made before his death. ¶ *Having loosed the pains of death.* The word *loosed*, λύσας, is opposed to *bind*, and is properly applied to a *cord*, or to any thing which is *bound*. See Matt. xxi. 2. Mark i. 7. Hence it means to *free*, or to *liberate*. Luke xiii. 16. 1 Cor. vii. 27. It is used in this sense here; though the idea of *untying* or *loosing* a band is retained, because the word translated *pains* often means a *cord* or *band*. ¶ *The pains of death.* ὀδύνας τοῦ θανάτου. The word translated *pains* denotes properly the extreme sufferings of parturition, and then any *severe* or *excruciating* pangs. Hence it is applied also to *death*, as being a state of extreme suffering. A very frequent meaning of the Hebrew word, of which this is the translation, is *cord*, or *band*. This perhaps was the *original* idea of the word; and the Hebrews expressed any extreme agony under the idea of *bands* or *cords* closely drawn, binding and constricting the

he should be holden of it.

25 For David speaketh ^c concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always

^c Ps. 16. 8-11.

limbs, and producing severe pain. Thus death was represented under this image of a *band* that confined men; that pressed closely on them; that prevented escape; and produced severe suffering. For this use of the word חבל, see Ps. cxix. 61. Isa. lxvi. 7. Jer. xxii. 23. Hos. xiii. 13. It is applied to death (Ps. xviii. 5), "The *snares* of death prevented me;" answering to the word *sorrows* in the previous part of the verse. Ps. cxvi. 3, "The *sorrows* of death compassed me, and the *pains* of hell (*hades*, or *sheol*, the cords or pains that were *binding me down* to the grave) gat hold on me." We are not to infer from this that our Lord suffered any thing *after* death. It means simply that he could not be held by the grave, but that God loosed the *bonds* which *had* held him there, and that he now set him free who had been encompassed by these pains or bonds, until they had brought him down to the grave. Pain, mighty pain, will encompass us all like the constrictions and bindings of a cord which we cannot loose, and will fasten our limbs and bodies in the grave. Those bands begin to be thrown around us in early life, and they are drawn closer and closer, until we lie panting under the stricture on a bed of pain, and then are still and immovable in the grave; subdued in a manner not a little resembling the mortal agonies of the tiger in the convolutions of the boa constrictor; or like Laocoon and his sons in the folds of the serpents from the island of Tenedos. ¶ *It was not possible.* This does not refer to any *natural* impossibility, or to any inherent efficacy or power in the *body* of Jesus itself; but simply means that *in the circumstances of the case such an event could not be.* Why it could not be, he proceeds at once to show. It could not be consistently with the promises of the Scriptures. Jesus was the *Prince of life* (Acts iii. 15), and had life in himself (John i. 4; v. 26), and had power to lay down his life, and to take it again (John x. 18); and it was indispensable that he should rise. He came, also, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb. ii. 14); and as it was his purpose to gain this victory, he could not be defeated in it by being confined to the grave.

25-28. For David speaketh, &c. This doctrine that the Messiah must rise from

before my face; for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved :

26 Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad ; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope :

the dead, Peter proceeds to prove by a quotation from the Old Testament. This passage is taken from Psalm xvi. 8—11. It is made from the Greek version of the Septuagint, with only one slight and unimportant change. Nor is there any material change, as will be seen, from the Hebrew. In what sense this Psalm can be applied to Christ will be seen after we have examined the expressions which Peter alleges. ¶ *I foresaw the Lord.* This is an unhappy translation. To *foresee* the Lord always *before* us conveys no idea, though it may be a *literal* translation of the passage. The word means to *foresee*, and then to *see before us*, that is, as *present* with us, to *regard* as being near. It thus implies to put *confidence* in one; to rely on him, or expect assistance from him. This is its meaning here. The Hebrew is, *I expected, or waited for.* It thus expresses the petition of one who is helpless and dependent, who *waits* for help from God. It is often thus used in the Old Testament. ¶ *Always before my face.* As being always present to help me, and to deliver me out of all my troubles. ¶ *He is on my right hand.* To be at hand is to be *near* to afford help. The *right hand* is mentioned because that was the place of dignity and honour. And David did not design simply to say that he was *near* to help him, but that he had the place of honour, the highest place in his affections. Ps. cix. 31. In our dependence on God we should *exalt* him. We should not merely regard him as our *help*, but should at the same time give him the highest place in our affections. ¶ *That I should not be moved.* That is, that no great evil or calamity should happen to me, that I may stand firm. The phrase denotes to sink into calamities, or to fall into the power of enemies. Ps. lxix. 2. 6; xlv. 6. This expresses the confidence of one who is in danger of great calamities and who puts his trust in the help of God alone.

26. *Therefore.* Peter ascribes these expressions to the Messiah. The *reason* why he would exult or rejoice was, that he would be preserved amidst the sorrows that were coming on him, and could look forward to the triumph that awaited him. Thus Paul says (Heb. xii. 2), that "Jesus . . . for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame," &c. And throughout the New

Testament, the shame and sorrow of his sufferings were regarded as connected with his glory and his triumph. Luke xxiv. 26. Phil. ii. 6—9. Eph. i. 20, 21. In this, our Saviour has left us an example, that we should walk in his steps. The prospect of future glory and triumph should sustain us amid all afflictions, and make us ready, like him, to lie down amid even the corruptions of the grave. ¶ *Did my heart rejoice.* In the Hebrew this is in the *present* tense, "my heart rejoices." The word *heart* here expresses the *person*, and is the same as saying *I rejoice*. The Hebrews used the different *members* to express the person. And thus we say, "every soul perished; the vessel had forty hands; wise heads do not think so; hearts of steel will not flinch," &c. Prof. Stuart on the xvth Psalm. The meaning is, because God is near me in time of calamity, and will support and deliver me, I will not be agitated or fear, but will exult in the prospect of the future, in view of the "joy that is set before me." ¶ *My tongue was glad.* Hebrew, *My glory, or my honour exults.* The word is used to denote majesty, splendour, dignity, honour. It is also used to express the *heart* or *soul*, either because that is the chief source of man's dignity, or because the word is also expressive of the *liver*, regarded by the Hebrews as the seat of the affections. Gen. xlix. 6, "Unto their assembly, mine honour," i. e. my soul, or myself, "be not thou united." Ps. lvii. 8, "Awake up, my glory," &c. Ps. cviii. 1, "I will sing . . . even with my glory." This word the Septuagint translated *tongue*. The Arabic and Latin Vulgate have also done the same. Why they thus use the word is not clear. It may be because the tongue, or the gift of speech, was that which chiefly contributes to the honour of man, or distinguishes him from the brutal creation. The word *glory* is used expressly for tongue in Ps. xxx. 12; "To the end that my *glory* may sing praise to thee, and not be silent." ¶ *Moreover also.* Truly; in addition to this. ¶ *My flesh.* My body. See ver. 31. 1 Cor. v. 5. It means here properly the body separate from the soul; the dead body. ¶ *Shall rest.* Shall rest or repose in the grave, free from corruption. ¶ *In hope.* In confident expectation of a resurrection. The Hebrew word rather expresses *confidence* than *hope*. The passage means,

27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou

suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

‘My body will I commit to the grave, with a confident expectation of the future, that is, with a firm belief that it will not see corruption, but will be raised up.’ It thus expresses the feelings of the dying Messiah; the assured confidence which he had that his repose in the grave would not be long, and would certainly come to an end. The death of Christians is also in the New Testament represented as a *sleep*, and as *repose* (Acts vii. 60. 1 Cor. xv. 6. 18. 1 Thess. iv. 13. 15. 2 Pet. iii. 4); and they may also, after the example of their Lord, commit their bodies to the dust, *in hope*. They shall lie in the grave under the assurance of a happy resurrection; and though their bodies, unlike his, shall moulder to their native dust, yet this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. 1 Cor. xv. 53.

27. *Thou wilt not leave my soul.* The word *soul*, with us, means the *thinking*, the *immortal* part of man, and is applied to it whether existing in connexion with the body, or whether separate from it. The Hebrew word translated *soul*, here, נַפְשִׁי, *naphshi*, however, may mean, My spirit, my mind, my life; and may denote here nothing more than *me*, or *myself*. It means, properly, breath; then life, or the vital principle, a living being; then the soul, the spirit, the thinking part. Instances where it is put for the individual himself, meaning “me,” or “myself,” may be seen in Ps. xi. 1; xxxv. 3. 7. Job ix. 21. There is no clear instance in which it is applied to the soul in its *separate* state, or disjoined from the body. In this place it must be explained in part by the meaning of the word *hell*. If that means *grave*, then this word probably means “me;” thou wilt not leave *me* in the *grave*. The meaning probably is, ‘Thou wilt not leave *me* in *Sheol*, neither,’ &c. The word *leave* here means, ‘Thou wilt not *resign me* to, or wilt not give me over to it, to be held under its power.’ In *hell*. *αις*; *αδου*. The word *hell*, in English, now commonly denotes the place of the future eternal punishment of the wicked. This sense it has acquired by long usage. It is a Saxon word, derived from *helan*, to cover; and denotes literally, a covered or deep place (*Webster*); then the dark and dismal abode of departed spirits; and then the place of torment. As the word is used now by us, it by no means expresses the

force of the original; and if with *this* idea we read a passage like the one before us, it would convey an erroneous meaning altogether; although *formerly* the English word perhaps expressed no more than the original. The Greek word *Hades* means literally a place devoid of light; a dark, obscure abode; and in Greek writers was applied to the dark and obscure regions where disembodied spirits were supposed to dwell. It occurs but eleven times in the New Testament. In this place it is the translation of the Hebrew, *Sheol*. In Rev. xx. 13, 14, it is connected with *death*. “And death and hell (*Hades*) delivered up the dead which were in them.” “And death and hell (*Hades*) were cast into the lake of fire.” See also Rev. vi. 8. i. 18, “I have the keys of hell and of death.” In 1 Cor. xv. 55, it means the grave. “O *grave* (*Hades*), where is thy victory?” In Matt. xi. 23, it means a deep, profound place, opposed to an exalted one; a condition of calamity and degradation opposed to former great prosperity. “Thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to *hell*” (*Hades*). In Luke xvi. 23, it is applied to the place where the rich man was after death, in a state of punishment. “In *hell* (*Hades*) he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.” In this place it is connected with the idea of suffering; and undoubtedly denotes a place of punishment. The Septuagint has used this word commonly to translate the word *Sheol*. Once it is used as a translation of the phrase “the stones of the pit” (Isa. xiv. 19); twice to express *silence*, particularly the silence of the grave (Ps. xciii. 17; cxiii. 26); once to express the Hebrew for “the shadow of death” (Job xxxviii. 17); and *sixty* times to translate the word *Sheol*. It is remarkable that it is *never* used in the Old Testament to denote the word *keber*, קֶבֶר, which properly denotes a *grave* or *sepulchre*. The idea which was conveyed by the word *Sheol*, or *Hades*, was not properly a *grave* or *sepulchre*, but that dark, unknown state, *including the grave*, which constituted the dominions of the dead. What idea the Hebrews had of the future world, it is now difficult to explain, and is not necessary in the case before us. The word originally denoting simply the state of the dead, the insatiable demands of the grave, came at last to be extended in its meaning, in proportion as they received new

revelations or formed new opinions about the future world. Perhaps the following may be the process of thought by which the word came to have the peculiar meanings which it is found to have in the Old Testament. (1.) The word *death*, and the *grave* (*kiber*), would express the abode of a deceased *body* in the earth. (2.) Man has a soul, a thinking principle; and the inquiry *must* arise, what will be its state? Will it die also? The Hebrews never appear to have believed that. Will it ascend to heaven at once? On that subject they had at first no knowledge. Will it go at once to a place of torment? Of that also they had no information at first. Yet they supposed it would live; and the word *Sheol* expressed just this state—the dark, unknown regions of the dead; the abode of spirits, whether good or bad; the residence of departed men, whether fixed in a permanent habitation, or whether wandering about. As they were ignorant of the size and spherical structure of the earth, they seem to have supposed this region to be situated *in the earth*, far below us; and hence it is put in opposition to heaven. Ps. cxxxix. 8, “If I ascend to heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell (*Sheol*), thou art there.” Amos ix. 2, 3. The most common meaning of the word is, therefore, to express those dark regions, *the lower world*, the region of ghosts, &c. Instances of this, almost without number, might be given. See a most striking and sublime instance of this in Isa. xiv. 9. “Hell from beneath is moved to meet thee,” &c.; where the assembled dead are represented as being agitated in all their vast regions at the death of the king of Babylon. (3.) The inquiry could not but arise, whether all these beings were happy? This point revelation decided; and it was decided in the Old Testament. Yet this word would better express the state of the *wicked dead*, than the righteous. It conveyed the idea of darkness, gloom, wandering; the idea of a sad and unfixed abode, unlike heaven. Hence the word *sometimes* expresses the idea of a place of punishment. Ps. ix. 17, “The wicked shall be turned into *hell*,” &c. Prov. xv. 11; xxiii. 14; xxvii. 20. Job xxvi. 6.—While, therefore, the word does not mean properly a *grave* or a *sepulchre*, yet it does mean often *the state of the dead*, without designating whether in happiness or wo, but implying the continued existence of the soul. In this sense it is often used in the Old Testament, where the Hebrew word is *Sheol*, and the Greek *Hades*. Gen. xxxvii. 35, “I will go down

into the grave, *unto my son*, mourning.” I will go down to the dead, to *death*, to my son, still there existing. xlii. 38; xliv. 29, “He shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.” Num. xvi. 30. 33. 1 Kings ii. 6. 9, &c. &c. In the place before us, therefore, the meaning is simply, *thou wilt not leave me AMONG THE DEAD*. This conveys *all* the idea. It does not mean literally the *grave* or the *sepulchre*; that relates only to the *body*. This expression refers to the *deceased Messiah*. Thou wilt not leave *him* among the dead; thou wilt raise him up. It is from this passage, perhaps, aided by two others (Rom. x. 7, and 1 Pet. iii. 19), that the doctrine originated, that Christ “descended,” as it is expressed in the creed, “*into hell*”; and many have invented strange opinions about his going among lost spirits. The doctrine of the Roman Catholic church has been, that he went to *purgatory*, to deliver the spirits confined there. But if the interpretation now given be correct, then it will follow, (1.) That nothing is affirmed here about the destination of the human *soul* of Christ after his death. That *he* went to the region of the dead is implied, but nothing further. (2.) It may be remarked that the Scriptures affirm nothing about the state of his *soul* in that time which intervened between his death and resurrection. The only intimation which occurs on the subject is such as to leave us to suppose that he was in a state of happiness. To the dying thief Jesus said, “*This day* shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Luke xxiii. 43. When Jesus died he said, “It is finished;” and he doubtless meant by that, that his sufferings and toils for man’s redemption were at an end. All suppositions of any toils or pains after his death are fables, and without the slightest warrant in the New Testament. ¶ *Thine holy One*. The word in the Hebrew which is translated here *holy one*, properly denotes one who is tenderly and piously devoted to another; and answers to the expression used in the New Testament, “my beloved Son.” It is also used as it is here by the Septuagint, and by Peter, to denote one that is *holy*, that is set apart to God. In this sense it is applied to Christ, either as being set apart to this office, or as so pure as to make it proper to designate him by way of eminence the *holy One*, or the *holy One of God*. It is several times used as the well-known designation of the Messiah. Mark i. 24, “I know thee, who thou art, the *holy One of God*.” Luke iv. 34. Acts iii. 14, “But ye denied the *holy One*, and the just,” &c. See also Luke i. 35, “That

28 Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

29 Men and brethren, ¹ let me

¹ or, I may.

holy thing that is born of thee shall be called the Son of God." ¶ *To see corruption.* To see corruption is to experience it, to be made partakers of it. The Hebrews often expressed the idea of experiencing any thing by the use of words pertaining to the senses; as, to *taste* of death, to *see* death, &c. *Corruption* here means putrefaction in the grave. The word which is used in the Psalm, שָׁחַת, *shahath*, is thus used in Job xvii. 14, "I have said to corruption, thou art my father," &c. The Greek word thus used properly denotes this. Thus it is used in Acts xiii. 34, 35, 36, 37. This meaning would be properly suggested by the Hebrew word; and thus the ancient versions understood it. The meaning *implied* in the expression is, that he of whom the Psalm was written should be restored to life again; and this meaning Peter proceeds to show that the words *must have*.

23. *Thou hast made known*, &c. The Hebrew is, "Thou wilt make known to me," &c. In relation to the Messiah, it means, Thou wilt *restore* me to life. ¶ *The way of life.* This properly means the path to life; as we say, the *road* to preferment or honour; the *path* to happiness, the *highway* to ruin, &c. See Prov. vii. 23, 27. It means, thou wilt make known to me *life itself*, i. e. thou wilt restore me to life. The expressions in the Psalm are capable of this interpretation without doing any violence to the text; and if the preceding verses refer to the death and burial of the Messiah, then the natural and proper meaning of this is, that he would be restored to life again. ¶ *Thou hast made me full of joy.* This expresses the feelings of the Messiah in view of the favour that would thus be showed him; the resurrection from the dead, and the elevation to the right hand of God. It was this which is represented as sustaining him—the prospect of the joy that was before him, in heaven. Heb. xii. 2. Eph. i. 20—22. ¶ *With thy countenance.* Literally, "with thy face," that is, in thy presence. The words *countenance* and *presence* mean the same thing; and denote *favour*, or the honour and happiness provided by being admitted to the presence of God. The prospect of the honour that would be bestowed on the Messiah, was that which sustained

freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.

him. And this proves that the person contemplated in the Psalm *expected* to be raised from the dead, and exalted to the *presence* of God. That expectation is now fulfilled; and the Messiah is now filled with joy in his exaltation to the throne of the universe. He has "ascended to his Father and our Father;" he is "seated at the right hand of God;" he has entered on that "joy which was set before him;" he is "crowned with glory and honour;" and "all things are put under his feet." In view of this, we may remark, (1.) That the Messiah had full and confident expectation that he would rise from the dead. This the Lord Jesus always evinced, and often declared it to his disciples. (2.) If the Saviour *rejoiced* in view of the glories before him, we should also. We should anticipate with joy an everlasting dwelling in the presence of God, and the high honour of sitting "with him on his throne, as he overcame, and is set down with the Father on his throne." (3.) The prospect of this should sustain us, as it did him, in the midst of persecution, calamity, and trials. They will soon be ended; and if we are his friends, we shall "overcome," as he did, and be admitted to "the fulness of joy" above, and to the "right hand" of God, "where are pleasures for evermore."

29. *Men and brethren.* This passage of the Psalms Peter now proves could not relate to David, but must have reference to the Messiah. He begins his argument in a respectful manner, addressing them as his *brethren*, though they had just charged him and the others with intoxication. Christians should use the usual respectful forms of salutation, whatever contempt and reproaches they may meet with from opposers. ¶ *Let me freely speak.* That is, 'It is lawful or proper to speak with boldness, or openly, respecting David.' Though he was eminently a pious man; though venerated by us all as a king; yet it is proper to say of him, that he is dead, and has returned to corruption. This was a delicate way of expressing high respect for the monarch whom they all honoured; and yet evincing boldness in examining a passage of Scripture which probably many supposed to have reference solely to him. ¶ *Of the patriarch David.* The word *patriarch* properly

30 Therefore being ^a a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn ^b with an oath ^c to him, that of the

^a 2Sa.23.2. ^b 2Sa.7.12,13. Ps.132.11. ^c He.6.17.

means the head or ruler of a family; and then the *founder* of a family, or an illustrious ancestor. It was commonly applied to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, &c. by way of eminence; the illustrious founders of the Jewish nation. Heb. vii. 4. Acts vii. 8, 9. It was also applied to the heads of the families, or the chief men of the tribes of Israel. 1 Chron. xxiv. 31. 2 Chron. xix. 8, &c. It was thus a title of honour, denoting high respect. Applied to David, it means that he was the illustrious head or founder of the royal family, and implies Peter's intention not to say any thing disrespectful of such a king; at the same time that he freely canvassed a passage of Scripture which had been supposed to refer to him. ¶ *Dead and buried.* The record of that fact they had in the Old Testament. There had been no pretence that he had risen, and therefore the Psalm could not apply to him. ¶ *His sepulchre is with us.* Is in the city of Jerusalem. Sepulchres were commonly situated *without* the walls of cities and the limits of villages. The custom of burying in towns was not commonly practised. This was true of other ancient nations as well as the Hebrews, and is still in eastern countries, except in the case of kings and very distinguished men, whose ashes are permitted to repose within the walls of a city. 1 Sam. xxviii. 3, "Samuel was dead . . . and Israel . . . buried him in Ramah, in his own city." 2 Kings xxi. 18, "Manasseh . . . was buried in the garden of his own house." 2 Chron. xvi. 14, "Asa was buried in the city of David." 2 Kings xiv. 20. The sepulchres of the Hebrew kings were on mount Zion. 2 Chron. xxi. 20; xxiv. 25; xxviii. 27; xxxii. 33; xxiv. 16. 2 Kings xiv. 20. David was buried in the city of David (1 Kings ii. 10), with his fathers, i. e. on mount Zion, where he built a city called after his name. 2 Sam. v. 7. Of what form the tombs of the kings were made is not certainly known. It is almost certain, however, that they would be constructed in a magnificent manner. The tombs were commonly excavations from rocks, or natural caves; and sepulchres cut out of the solid rock, of vast extent, are known to have existed. The following account of the tomb called "the sepulchre of the kings," is abridged from Maundrell. "The approach is through an entrance cut out of a solid rock, which

fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

admits you into an open court about forty paces square, cut down into the rock. On the south side is a portico nine paces long and four broad, hewn likewise out of the solid rock. At the end of the portico is the descent to the sepulchres. The descent is into a room about seven or eight yards square, cut out of the natural rock. From this room there are passages into six more, all of the same fabric with the first. In every one of these rooms, except the first, were coffins placed in niches in the sides of the chamber," &c. (Maundrell's Travels, p. 76.) If the tombs of the kings were of this form, it is clear that they were works of great labour and expense. Probably also there were, as there are now, costly and splendid monuments erected to the memory of the mighty dead. ¶ *Unto this day.* That the sepulchre of David was well known and honoured, is clear from Josephus. Antiq. b. vii. c. xv. § 3. "He (David) was buried by his son Solomon *in Jerusalem* with great magnificence, and with all the other funeral pomps with which kings used to be buried. Moreover, he had immense wealth buried with him: for a thousand and three hundred years afterwards, Hyrcanus the high-priest, when he was besieged by Antiochus, and was desirous of giving him money to raise the siege, opened one room of David's sepulchre, and took out three thousand talents. Herod, many years afterward, opened another room, and took away a great deal of money," &c. See also Antiq. b. xiii. c. viii. § 4. The tomb of a monarch like David would be well known and had in reverence. Peter might, then, confidently appeal to *their own belief* and knowledge, that David had not been raised from the dead. No Jew *believed* or *supposed* it. All, by their care of his sepulchre, and by the honour with which they regarded his grave, *believed* that he had returned to corruption. The Psalm, therefore, *could* not apply to him.

30. *Therefore.* As David was dead and buried, it was clear that he could not have referred to himself in this remarkable declaration. It followed that he must have had reference to some other one. ¶ *Being a prophet.* One who foretold future events. That David was inspired, is clear. 2 Sam. xxiii. 2. Many of the prophecies relating to the Messiah

are found in the Psalms of David. Ps. xxii. 1. Comp. Matt. xxvii. 46. Luke xxiv. 44.—Ps. xxii. 18. Comp. Matt. xxvii. 35.—Ps. lxxix. 21. Comp. Matt. xxvii. 34. 48.—Ps. lxxix. 20. Comp. Acts i. 20. ¶ *And knowing.* Knowing by what God had said to him respecting his posterity. ¶ *Had sworn with an oath.* The places which speak of God as having sworn to David are found in Ps. lxxxix. 3, 4. “I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish,” &c. And Ps. cxxxii. 11, “The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David, he will not turn from it, Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon my throne.” Ps. lxxxix. 35, 36. The promise to which reference is made in all these places is in 2 Sam. vii. 11—16. ¶ *Of the fruit of his loins.* Of his descendants. See 2 Sam. vii. 12. Gen. xxxv. 11; xli. 26. 1 Kings xviii. 19, &c. ¶ *According to the flesh.* That is, so far as the human nature of the Messiah was concerned, he would be descended from David. Expressions like these are very remarkable. If the Messiah was only a *man*, they would be unmeaning. They are *never* used in relation to a mere man; and they imply that the speaker or writer supposed that there pertained to the Messiah a nature which was not according to the flesh. See Rom. i. 3, 4. ¶ *He would raise up Christ.* That is, the Messiah. To *raise up* seed, or descendants, is to give them to him. The promises made to David in all these places had immediate reference to Solomon, and to his descendants. But it is clear that the New Testament writers understood them as referring to the Messiah. And it is no less clear that the Jews understood that the Messiah was to be descended from David. Matt. xii. 23; xxi. 9; xxii. 42. 45. Mark xi. 10. John vii. 42, &c. In what way these promises that were made to David were understood as applying to the Messiah, it may not be easy to determine. The *fact*, however, is clear. The following remarks may throw some light on the subject. The kingdom which was promised to David was to have no end; it was to be established for ever. Yet his descendants died, and all other kingdoms changed. The promise likewise stood *by itself*; it was not made to any other of the Jewish kings; nor were similar declarations made of surrounding kingdoms and nations. It came, therefore, gradually to be applied to that future King and kingdom which was the hope of the nation; and their eyes were anxiously fixed on the long-expected Messiah. At the time that he

came, it had become the settled doctrine of the Jews that he was to descend from David, and that his kingdom was to be perpetual. On this belief of the prophecy the apostles argued; and the opinions of the Jews furnished a strong point by which they could convince them that Jesus was the Messiah. Peter affirms that David was *aware* of this, and that he so understood the promise as referring not only to Solomon, but in a far more important sense to the Messiah. Happily, we have a commentary of David himself, also, as expressing his own views of that promise. That comment is found particularly in the iid, xxiid, lxixth, and xlvth Psalms. In these Psalms there can be no doubt that David looked forward to the coming of the Messiah; and there can be as little that he regarded the promise made to him as extending to his coming and his reign.

It may be remarked, that there are some important variations in the manuscripts in regard to this verse. The expression “according to the flesh” is omitted in many MSS. and is now left out by Griesbach in his New Testament. It is omitted also by the ancient Syriac and Ethiopic versions, and by the Latin Vulgate. ¶ *To sit on his throne.* To be his successor in his kingdom. Saul was the first of the kings of Israel. The kingdom was taken away from him and his posterity, and conferred on David and his descendants. It was determined that it should be continued *in the family* of David, and no more go out of his family, as it had from the family of Saul. The peculiar characteristic of David as king, or that which distinguished him from the other kings of the earth, was, that *he reigned over the people of God*. Israel was his chosen people; and the kingdom was over that nation. Hence he that should reign *over the people of God*, though in a manner somewhat different from David, would be regarded as occupying *his throne*, and as being his successor. The form of the administration might be varied, but it would still retain its prime characteristic, as being a reign *over the people of God*. In this sense the Messiah sits on the throne of David. He is his descendant and successor. He has an empire *over all the friends of the Most High*. And as that kingdom is destined to fill the earth, and to be eternal in the heavens, so it may be said that it is a kingdom which shall have no end. It is spiritual, but not the less real; defended not with carnal weapons, but not the less really defended; advanced not by the

31 He, seeing this before, ^a spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

32 This ^b Jesus hath God raised up, whereof ^c we all are witnesses.

^a 1Pe. 1.11,12.

^b ver.24.

^c Lu.24.48.

sword and the din of arms, but not the less *really* advanced against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places; not under a *visible* head and earthly monarch, but not less really under the Captain of salvation, and the King of kings.

31. *He, seeing this before, &c.* By the spirit of prophecy. From this it appears that David had distinct views of the great doctrines pertaining to the Messiah. † *Spake, &c.* See Ps. xvi. † *That his soul, &c.* See Note on ver. 27.

32. *This Jesus.* Peter, having shown that it was *predicted* that the Messiah would rise, now affirms that it was done in the case of Jesus. If it was a matter of prophecy, all objection to the truth of the doctrine was taken away, and the only question was, whether there was *evidence* that this had been done. The proof of this Peter now alleges, and offers his own testimony, and that of his brethren, to the truth of this great and glorious fact. † *We all are witnesses.* It seems probable that Peter refers here to the whole one hundred and twenty who were present, and who were ready to attest it in any manner. The matter which was to be proved was, that Jesus was seen alive after he had been put to death. The apostles were appointed to bear witness of this. And we are told by Paul (1 Cor. xv. 6), that he was seen by more than five hundred brethren, i. e. Christians, at one time. The hundred and twenty assembled on this occasion were doubtless part of the number, and were ready to attest this. This was the proof that Peter alleged; and the strength of this proof was, and should have been, perfectly irresistible. (1.) They had *seen* him themselves. They did not conjecture it, or reason about it; but they had the evidence on which men act every day, and which must be regarded as satisfactory—the evidence of their own senses. (2.) The *number* was such they could not be imposed on. If one hundred and twenty persons could not prove a plain matter of fact, nothing could be established by testimony; there could be no way of arriving at any facts. (3.) The

33 Therefore, ^d being by the right hand of God exalted, and having ^e received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this ^f which ye now see and hear.

^d c.5.31. Ph.2.9.

^e Jno.16.7,13. c.1.4.

^f c.10.45.

Ep.4.8.

thing to be established was a plain matter. It was not that they *saw him rise*. That they never pretended. Impostors *would* have done thus. But it was that they saw him, talked, walked, ate, drank with him, *being alive* AFTER he had been crucified. The fact of his death was matter of Jewish record; and no one called it in question. The only fact for Christianity to make out was that he was seen *alive* afterwards; and this was attested by many witnesses. (4.) They had no interest in deceiving the world in this thing. There was no prospect of pleasure, wealth, or honour in doing it. (5.) They offered themselves now as ready to endure any sufferings, or to die, in attestation of the truth of this event.

33. *Therefore, being by the right hand.* The *right hand* among the Hebrews was often used to denote *power*; and the expression here means, not that he was exalted to the right hand of God, but *by* his power. He was raised from the dead by his power, and borne to heaven, triumphant over all his enemies. The use of the word *right hand* to denote *power* is common in the Scriptures. Job xl. 14, "Thine own right hand can save thee." Ps. xvii. 17, "Thou savest by thy right hand them that trust in thee." Ps. xviii. 35; xx. 6; xxi. 8; xlv. 3; lx. 5, &c. † *Exalted.* Constituted King and Messiah in heaven. Raised up from his condition of humiliation to the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. John xvii. 5. *And having received, &c.* The Holy Ghost was promised to the disciples before his death. John xiv. 26; xv. 26; xvi. 13—15. It was expressly declared, (1.) That the Holy Ghost would not be given except the Lord Jesus should return to heaven (John xvi. 7); and (2.) That this gift was in the power of the Father, and that *he* would send him. John xiv. 26; xv. 26. This promise was now fulfilled, and those who witnessed the extraordinary scene before them could not doubt that it was the effect of divine power. † *Hath shed forth this, &c.* This power of speaking different languages, and declaring the truth of the gospel. In this way Peter accounts for the remarkable

34 For David is not ascended into the heavens : but he saith himself, The LORD^a said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,

^a Ps. 110.1. Matt. 22.44.

events before them. It could not be produced by new wine, ver. 15. It was expressly foretold, ver. 16—21. It was predicted that Jesus would rise, ver. 22—31. The apostles were witnesses that he *had* risen, and that he had promised that the Holy Spirit should descend; and the fulfilment of this promise was a rational way of accounting for the scene before them. It was unanswerable; and the effect on those who witnessed it was such as might be expected.

34, 35. *For David is not ascended into the heavens.* That is, David has not risen from the dead, and ascended to heaven. This further shows that Ps. xvi. could not refer to David, but must refer to the Messiah. Great as they esteemed David, and much as they were accustomed to apply these expressions of the Scripture to him, yet they could not be applicable to him. They *must* refer to some other being; and especially that passage which Peter now proceeds to quote. It was of great importance to show that these expressions could not apply to David, and also that David bore testimony to the exalted character and dignity of the Messiah. Hence Peter here adduces David himself as affirming that the Messiah was to be exalted to a dignity far above his own. This does not affirm that David was not saved, or that his spirit had not ascended to heaven, but that he had not been *exalted* in the heavens in the sense in which Peter was speaking of the Messiah. ¶ *But he saith himself.* Ps. cx. 1. ¶ *The LORD.* The small capitals used in translating the word LORD in the Bible, denote that the original word is *Jehovah*. The Hebrews regarded this as the *peculiar* name of God, a name incommunicable to any other being. It is not applied to any being but God in the Scriptures. The Jews had such a reverence for it that they never pronounced it; but when it occurred in the Scriptures they pronounced another name, *Adoni*. Here it means, *Jehovah* said, &c. ¶ *My Lord.* This is a different word in the Hebrew: it is *Adoni*. אדני. It properly is applied by a servant to his master, or a subject to his sovereign, or is used as a title of respect by an inferior to a superior. It means here, 'Jehovah said to him whom I, David, acknow-

35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool.

36 Therefore let all the house^b of Israel know assuredly, that^c God

^b Zec. 13.1.

^c c. 5.31.

ledge to be *my* superior and sovereign. Thus, though he regarded him as his descendant according to the flesh, yet he regarded him also as his superior and Lord. By reference to this passage our Saviour confounded the Pharisees. Matt. xxii. 42—46. That the passage in this Psalm refers to the Messiah is clear. Our Saviour, in Matt. xxii. 42, expressly applied it thus, and in such a manner as to show that this was the well-understood doctrine of the Jews. See Notes on Matt. xxii. 42, &c.

36. *Therefore, let all, &c.* 'Convinced by the prophecies; by our testimony, and by the remarkable scene exhibited on the day of Pentecost; let all be convinced that the true Messiah has come, and has been exalted to heaven.' ¶ *House of Israel.* The word *house* often means *family*; let all the family of Israel, i. e. all the nation of the Jews, know this. ¶ *Know assuredly.* Be assured, or know without any hesitation, or possibility of mistake. This is the sum of his argument, or his discourse. He had established the points which he purposed to prove; and he now applies it to his hearers. ¶ *God hath made.* God hath appointed, or constituted. See ch. v. 31. ¶ *That same Jesus.* The very person who had suffered. He was raised with the same body, and had the same soul; was the same being, as distinguished from all others. So Christians, in the resurrection, will be the *same* beings that they were before they died. ¶ *Whom ye crucified.* See ver. 23. There was nothing better fitted to show them the guilt of having done this, than the argument which Peter used. He showed them that God had sent him; that he was the Messiah; that God had showed his love for him, in raising him from the dead. The Son of God, and the hope of their nation, they had put to death. He was not an impostor; nor a man sowing sedition; nor a blasphemer; but the Messiah of God; and they had imbrued their hands in his blood.—There is nothing better fitted to make sinners fear and tremble, than to show them that in rejecting Christ, they have rejected God; in refusing to serve him, they have refused to serve God. The crime of sinners has a double malignity, as committed against a kind and lovely Saviour, and against the

hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord ^a and Christ. ^b

37 Now when they heard this,

^a Jno. 3.35.

^b Ps. 2.2, 6-8.

God who loved him, and appointed him to save men. Comp. ch. iii. 14, 15. ¶ *Both Lord.* The word *lord* properly denotes proprietor, master, or sovereign. Here it means clearly that God had exalted him to be the king so long expected; and that he had given him dominion in the heavens; or as we should say, ruler of all things. The extent of this dominion may be seen in John xvii. 2. Eph. i. 21, &c. In the exercise of this office, he now rules in heaven and on earth; and will yet come to judge the world. This truth was particularly fitted to excite their fear. They had murdered their Sovereign, now shown to be raised from the dead, and intrusted with infinite power. They had reason, therefore, to fear that he would come forth in vengeance, and punish them for their crimes. Sinners, in opposing the Saviour, are at war with their living and mighty Sovereign and Lord. He has all power; and it is not safe to contend against the Judge of the living and the dead. ¶ *And Christ.* Messiah. They had thus crucified the hope of their nation; imbrued their hands in the blood of him to whom the prophets had looked; and put to death that Holy One, the prospect of whose coming had sustained the most holy men of the world in affliction, and cheered them when they looked on to future years. That hope of their fathers had come, and they had put him to death; and it is no wonder that the consciousness of this, that a sense of guilt, and shame, and confusion, should overwhelm their minds, and lead them to ask in deep distress what they should do?

37. *Now when they heard this.* When they heard this declaration of Peter, and this proof that Jesus was the Messiah. There was no fanaticism in his discourse; it was cool, close, pungent reasoning. He proved to them the truth of what he was saying, and thus prepared the way for this effect. ¶ *They were pricked in their heart.* The word translated *were pricked*, κατενυγησαν, is not used elsewhere in the New Testament. It properly denotes to pierce or penetrate with a needle, lancet, or sharp instrument; and then to pierce with grief, or acute pain of any kind. It answers precisely to our word *compunction*. It implies also the idea of sudden as well as acute grief. In

they were pricked ^c in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what ^d shall we do?

^c Eze. 7.16, Zec. 12.10.

^d c. 9.6; 16.30.

this case it means that they were suddenly and deeply affected with anguish and alarm at what Peter had said. The causes of their grief may have been these: (1.) Their sorrow that the Messiah had been put to death by his own countrymen. (2.) Their deep sense of guilt in having done this. There would be mingled here a remembrance of ingratitude, and a consciousness that they had been guilty of murder of the most aggravated and horrid kind, that of having killed their own Messiah. (3.) The fear of his wrath: He was still alive, exalted to be their Lord, and intrusted with all power. They were afraid of his vengeance; they were conscious that they deserved it; and they supposed that they were exposed to it. (4.) What they had done could not be undone. The guilt remained; they could not wash it out. They had imbrued their hands in the blood of innocence; and the guilt of that oppressed their souls. This expresses the usual feelings which sinners have when they are convicted of sin. ¶ *Men and brethren.* This was an expression denoting affectionate earnestness. Just before this they mocked the disciples, and charged them with being filled with new wine, ver. 13. They now treated them with respect and confidence. The views which sinners have of Christians and Christian ministers are greatly changed when they are under conviction for sin. Before that, they may deride and oppose them: then, they are glad to be taught by the obscurest Christian; and even cling to a minister of the gospel as if he could save them by his own power. ¶ *What shall we do?* What shall we do to avoid the wrath of this crucified and exalted Messiah? They were apprehensive of his vengeance, and they wished to know how to avoid it. Never was a more important question asked than this. It is the question which all convicted sinners ask. It implies an apprehension of danger; a sense of guilt; and a readiness to yield the will to the claims of God. This was the same question asked by Paul (Acts ix. 6); "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and by the jailer (Acts xvi. 30); "He... came trembling.... and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The state of mind in this case—the case of a convicted sinner—con-

sists in, (1.) A deep sense of the evil of the past life; remembrance of a thousand crimes perhaps before forgotten; a pervading and deepening conviction that the heart, and conversation, and life has been evil, and deserves condemnation. (2.) Apprehension about the justice of God; alarm when the mind looks upward to him, or onward to the day of death and judgment. (3.) An earnest wish, amounting sometimes to agony, to be delivered from this sense of condemnation, and this apprehension of the future. (4.) A readiness to sacrifice all to the will of God, to surrender the governing purpose of the mind, and to do what he requires. In this state the soul is prepared to receive the offers of eternal life; and *when* the sinner comes to this, the offers of mercy meet his case, and he yields himself to the Lord Jesus, and finds peace.

In regard to this discourse of Peter, and this remarkable result, we may observe, (1.) That this is the first discourse which was preached after the ascension of Christ, and is a model which the ministers of religion should imitate. (2.) It is a clear and close argument. There is no ranting, no declamation, nothing but *truth* presented in a clear and striking manner. It abounds with *proof* of his main point; and supposes that his hearers were rational beings, and capable of being influenced by truth. Ministers have no right to address men as incapable of reason and thought; nor to imagine that because they are speaking on religious subjects, that therefore they are at liberty to speak nonsense. (3.) Though these were eminent sinners, and had added to the crime of murdering the Messiah that of deriding the Holy Ghost and the ministers of the gospel, yet Peter *reasoned* with them coolly, and endeavoured to *convince* them of their guilt. Men should be treated as endowed with *reason*, and as capable of seeing the force and beauty of the great truths of religion. (4.) The arguments of Peter were *adapted* to make this impression on their minds, and to impress them deeply with the sense of their guilt. He *proved* to them that they had been guilty of putting the Messiah to death; that God had raised him up; and that they were now in the midst of the scenes which established one strong proof of the truth of what he was saying. No class of truths could have been so well adapted to make an impression of their guilt as these. (5.) Conviction for sin is a rational process on a sinner's mind. It is the *proper* state produced by a view of the past sins. It is suffering *truth* to make an ap-

propriate impression; suffering the mind to feel as it *ought* to feel. The man who is guilty, ought to be willing to see and confess it. It is no disgrace to confess an error, or to feel deeply when we know we are guilty. Disgrace consists in a hypocritical desire to conceal crime; in the *pride* that is unwilling to avow it; in the *falsehood* which denies it. To feel it, and to acknowledge it, is the mark of an open and ingenuous mind. (6.) These same truths are adapted still to produce conviction for sin. The sinner's treatment of the Messiah should produce grief and alarm. He did not murder him; but he has rejected him: he did not crown him with thorns; but he has despised him: he did not insult him when hanging on the cross; but he has a thousand times insulted him since: he did not pierce his side with the spear; but he has pierced his heart by rejecting him, and contemning his mercy. *For these things he should weep.* In the Saviour's resurrection he has also a deep interest. He rose as the pledge that we may rise: and when the sinner looks forward, he should remember that he *must* meet the ascended Son of God. The Saviour reigns; he lives, Lord of all. The sinner's deeds now are aimed at his throne, and his heart, and his crown. All his crimes are seen by his Sovereign; and it is not safe to mock the Son of God on his throne; or to despise him who will soon come to judgment. When the sinner feels these truths, he *should* tremble, and cry out, What shall I do? (7.) We see here *how* the Spirit operates in producing conviction of sin. It is not in an arbitrary manner; it is in accordance with *truth*, and by the *truth*. Nor have we a right to expect that he will convict and convert men, except as the *truth* is presented to their minds. They who desire success in the gospel should present clear, striking, and impressive truth; for such only God is accustomed to bless. (8.) We have in the conduct of Peter and the other apostles, a striking instance of the *power* of the gospel. Just before, Peter, trembling and afraid, had denied his master with an oath. Now, in the presence of the murderers of the Son of God, he boldly charged them with their crime, and dared their fury. Just before, all the disciples forsook the Lord Jesus, and fled. Now, in the presence of his murderers, they lifted their voice, and proclaimed their guilt and danger, even in the city where he had been just arraigned and put to death. What could have produced this change but the power of God? And is there not

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ,

a Lu.24.47. c.3.19.

proof here that a religion which produces such changes came from heaven?

38. Then Peter said unto them. Peter had been the chief speaker, though others had also addressed them. He now, in the name of all, directed the multitude what to do. ¶ *Repent.* See Note, Matt. iii. 2. Repentance implies sorrow for sin as committed against God, with a purpose to forsake it. It is not merely a fear of the consequences, or of the wrath of God in hell. It is such a view of sin as evil in itself, as to lead the mind to hate it and forsake it. Laying aside all view of the punishment of sin, the true penitent hates it. Even if sin was the means of procuring him happiness; if it would promote his gratification, and be unattended with any future punishment, he would hate it and turn from it. The mere fact that it is evil, and that God hates it, is a sufficient reason why those who are truly penitent should hate it and forsake it. False repentance dreads the consequences of sin; true repentance dreads sin itself. These persons whom Peter addressed had been in merely alarmed; they were afraid of wrath, and especially of the wrath of the Messiah. They had no true sense of sin as an evil, but were simply afraid of punishment. This alarm Peter did not regard as by any means genuine repentance. Such conviction for sin would soon wear off, unless repentance became thorough and complete. Hence he told them to repent, to turn from sin, to exercise sorrow for it as an evil and bitter thing, and to express their sorrow in the proper manner. We may learn here, (1.) That there is no safety in mere conviction for sin: it may soon pass off, and leave the soul as thoughtless as before. (2.) There is no goodness or holiness in mere alarm or conviction. The devils tremble. A man may fear, who yet has a firm purpose to do evil if he can do it with impunity. (3.) Many are greatly troubled and alarmed who yet never repent. There is no situation where souls are so easily deceived as here. Alarm is taken for repentance; trembling for godly sorrow; and the fear of wrath is taken to be the true fear of God. (4.) True repentance is the only thing in such a state of mind that can give any relief. An ingenuous confession of sin, a solemn purpose to forsake it, and a true hatred of it,

for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

is the only thing that can give the mind true composure. Such is the constitution of the mind, that nothing else will furnish relief. But the moment we are willing to make an open confession of guilt, the mind is delivered of its burden, and the convicted soul finds peace. Till this is done, and the hold on sin is broken, there can be no peace. (5.) We see here what direction is to be given to a convicted sinner. We are not to direct him to wait; nor to suppose that he is in a good way; nor to continue to seek; nor to call him a mourner; nor to take sides with him, as if God were wrong and harsh; nor to tell him to read, and search, and postpone the subject to a future time. We are to direct him to repent; to mourn over his sins, and to forsake them. Religion demands that he should at once surrender himself to God by genuine repentance; by confession that God is right, and that he was wrong; and by a firm purpose to live a life of holiness. ¶ *Be baptized.* See Note, Matt. iii. 6. The direction which Christ gave to his apostles was, that they should baptize all who believed. Matt. xxviii. 19. Mark xvi. 16. The Jews had not been baptized; and a baptism now would be a profession of the religion of Christ, or a declaration made before the world that they embraced Jesus as their Messiah. It was equivalent to saying that they should publicly and professedly embrace Jesus Christ as their Saviour. The gospel requires such a profession; and no one is at liberty to withhold it. And a similar declaration is to be made to all who are inquiring the way to life. They are to exercise repentance; and then, without any unnecessary delay, to evince it in the ordinances of the gospel. If men are unwilling to profess religion, they have none. If they will not, in the proper way, show that they are truly attached to Christ, it is proof that they have no such attachment. Baptism is the application of water, as expressive of the need of purification, and as emblematic of the influences from God that can alone cleanse the soul. It is also a form of dedication to the service of God. ¶ *In the name of Jesus Christ.* Not *in*, but *into*. The usual form of baptism is *into* the name of the Father, &c. *in*. Here it does not mean to be baptized by the authority of Jesus Christ; but it means to be

39 For the promise ^a is unto you, and to your children, and ^b to all

^a Joel 2.28. ^b Ep. 2.13,17.

baptized for him and his service; to be consecrated in this way, and by this public profession, to him, and to his cause. The name of Jesus Christ means the same as Jesus Christ himself. To be baptized to his name is to be devoted to him. The word name is often thus used. And the profession which they were to make amounted to this: a confession of sins; a hearty purpose to turn from them; a reception of Jesus as the Messiah, and as their Saviour; and a determination to become his followers, and to be devoted to his service. Thus (1 Cor. x. 2), to be baptized unto Moses means to take him as the leader and guide. It does not follow that in administering the ordinance of baptism they used only the name of Jesus Christ. It is much more probable that they used the form prescribed by the Saviour himself (Matt. xxviii. 19); though as the peculiar mark of a Christian is that he receives and honours Jesus Christ, this name is used here as implying the whole. The same thing occurs in Acts xix. 5. ¶ *For the remission of sins.* Not merely the sin of crucifying the Messiah, but of all sins. There is nothing in baptism itself that can wash away sin. That can be done only by the pardoning mercy of God through the atonement of Christ. But baptism is expressive of a willingness to be pardoned in that way; and a solemn declaration of our conviction that there is no other way of remission. He who comes to be baptized, comes with a *professed* conviction that he is a sinner, that there is no other way of mercy but in the gospel, and with a professed willingness to comply with the terms of salvation, and receive it as it is offered through Jesus Christ. ¶ *And ye shall receive, &c.* The gift of the Holy Ghost here does not mean his extraordinary gifts, or the power of working miracles. But it simply means, you shall partake of the influences of the Holy Ghost as far as they may be adapted to your case, as far as may be needful for your comfort, and peace, and sanctification. There is no evidence that they were all endowed with the power of working miracles; nor does the connexion of the passage require us thus to understand it. Nor does it mean that they had not been awakened by his influences. All true conviction is from him. John xvi. 8—10. But it is also the office of the Spirit to comfort, to enlighten, to give peace,

that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

and thus to give evidence that the soul is born again. To this, probably, Peter refers; and this all who are born again, and profess faith in Christ, possess. There is peace, calmness, joy; there is evidence of piety, and that evidence is the product of the influences of the Spirit. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace," &c. Gal. v. 22. 24.

39. *For the promise.* That is, the promise respecting the particular thing of which he was speaking—the influences of the Holy Ghost. This promise he had adduced in the beginning of his discourse (ver. 17), and he now applies it to them. As the Spirit was promised to descend on Jews and their sons and daughters, it was applicable to them in the circumstances in which they then were. The only hope of lost sinners is in the promises of God; and the only thing that can give comfort to a soul that is convicted of sin is the hope that God will pardon and save. ¶ *To you.* To you Jews, even though you have crucified the Messiah. The promise had especial reference to the Jewish people. ¶ *To your children.* In Joel, to their sons and daughters, who should, nevertheless, be old enough to prophesy. Similar promises occur in Isa. xlv. 3, "I will pour my Spirit on thy seed, and my blessing on thine offspring," and Isa. lix. 21. In these and similar places, their descendants or posterity are denoted. It does not refer to children as children, and should not be adduced to establish the propriety of infant baptism, or as applicable particularly to infants. It is a promise, indeed, to parents that the blessings of salvation shall not be confined to parents, but shall be extended also to their posterity. Under this promise parents may be encouraged to train up their children for God; to devote them to his service; believing that it is the gracious purpose of God to perpetuate the blessings of salvation from age to age. ¶ *To all.* To the whole race; not limited to Jews. ¶ *Afar off.* To those in other lands. It is probable that Peter here referred to the Jews who were scattered in other nations; for he does not seem yet to have understood that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles. See ch. x. Yet the promise was equally applicable to the Gentiles as the Jews; and the apostles were afterwards brought to understand it. Acts x. Rom. x. 12. 14—20; xi. The

40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying,

Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

Gentiles are sometimes clearly indicated by the expression "as far off," (Eph. ii. 13. 17); and they are represented as having been brought *nigh* by the blood of Christ. The phrase is equally applicable to those who have been far off from God *by their sins* and their *evil affections*. To them also the promise is extended if they will return. ¶ *Even as many, &c.* The promise is not to those who do not *hear* the gospel, nor to those who do not *obey* it; but it is to those to whom God in his gracious providence shall send it. He has the power and right to pardon. The meaning of Peter is, that the promise is ample, full, free; that it is fitted to all, and may be applied to all; that there is no defect or want in the provisions or promises; but that God *may* extend it to whomsoever he pleases. We see here how ample and full are the offers of mercy. God is not limited in the provisions of his grace; but the plan is *applicable* to all mankind. It is also the purpose of God to send it to all men; and he has given a solemn charge to his church to do it. We cannot reflect but with deep pain on the fact that these provisions have been made, fully made; that they are adapted to all men; and yet that by his people they have been extended to so small a portion of the human family. If the promise of life is to all, it is the duty of the church to send to all the message of eternal mercy.

40. *Many other words.* This discourse, though one of the longest in the New Testament, is but an outline. It contains, however, the substance of the plan of mercy; and is admirably arranged to obtain its object. ¶ *Testify.* Bear witness to. He bore witness to the promises of Christianity, to the truths pertaining to the danger of sinners; and to the truth respecting the character of that generation. ¶ *Exhort.* He entreated them by arguments and promises. ¶ *Save yourselves.* This expression here denotes, preserve yourselves from the *influence*, opinions, and fate, of this generation. It implies that they were to use diligence and effort to deliver themselves. God deals with men as free agents. He calls upon them to put forth their own power and effort to be saved. Unless men put forth their own strength and exertion, they will never be saved. When they *are* saved, they will ascribe to God the praise for having inclined them to seek him, and for the grace whereby they *are* saved.

¶ *This generation.* This age or race of men, the Jews then living. They were not to apprehend danger *from* them from which they were *to* deliver themselves; but they were to apprehend danger from being *with* them, united in their plans, designs, and feelings. From the influence of their opinions, &c. they were to escape. That generation was signally corrupt and wicked. See Matt. xxiii. xii. 39; xvi. 4. Mark viii. 38. They had crucified the Messiah; and they were for their sins soon to be destroyed. ¶ *Untoward.* "Perverse, refractory, not easily guided or taught." (*Webster.*) The same character our Saviour had given of that generation in Matt. xi. 16—19. This character they had shown uniformly. They were smooth, cunning, plausible; but they were corrupt in principle, and wicked in conduct. The Pharisees had a vast hold on the people. To break away from them was to set at defiance all their power and doctrines; to alienate themselves from their teachers and friends; to brave the power of those in office, and those who had long claimed the right of teaching and guiding the nation. The chief danger of those who were now awakened was from this generation; that they would deride, or denounce, or persecute them, and induce them to abandon their seriousness, and turn back to their sins. And hence Peter exhorted them at once to break off from them, and give themselves to Christ. We may hence learn, (1.) That if sinners will be saved they must make an effort. There is no promise to any unless they will exert themselves. (2.) The principal danger which besets those who are awakened arises from their former companions. They are often wicked, cunning, rich, and mighty. They may be their kindred, and will seek to drive off their serious impressions by derision, or argument, or persecution. They have a mighty hold on the affections; and they will seek to use it to prevent those who are awakened from becoming Christians. (3.) Those who are awakened should resolve at once to break off from their evil companions, and unite themselves to Christ and his people. There may be no other way in which this can be done than by resolving to forsake the society of those who are infidels, and scoffers, and profane. They should forsake the world, and give themselves up to God, and resolve to have only so much intercourse with the world as may

41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.

be required by duty, and as may be consistent with a supreme purpose to live to the honour of God.

41. *They that gladly received.* The word rendered *gladly* means *freely*, cheerfully, joyfully. It implies that they did it without compulsion, and with joy. Religion is not compulsion. They who become Christians do it cheerfully; and do it rejoicing in the *privilege* of becoming reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. Though so many received his word and were baptized, yet it is implied that there were others who did not. It is probable that there were multitudes assembled who were alarmed, but who did not receive the word with joy. In all revivals there are many who become alarmed, who are anxious about their souls, but who refuse the gospel, and again become thoughtless, and are ruined. ¶ *His word.* The message which Peter had spoken respecting the pardon of sins through Jesus Christ. ¶ *Were baptized.* That is, those who professed a readiness to embrace the offers of salvation. The narrative plainly implies that this was done the same day. Their conversion was instantaneous. The demand on them was to yield themselves at once to God. And their profession was made, and the ordinance which sealed their profession administered without delay. ¶ *And the same day.* The discourse of Peter commenced at nine o'clock in the morning, ver. 15. How long it continued it is not said; but the ceremony of admitting them to the church and of baptizing them was evidently performed on the same day. The mode in which this is done is not mentioned; but it is highly improbable that in the midst of the city of Jerusalem three thousand persons were wholly immersed in one day. The whole narrative supposes that it was all done in the city; and yet there is no probability that there were conveniences there for *immersing* so many persons in a single day. Besides, in the ordinary way of administering baptism by immersion, it is difficult to conceive that so many persons could have been immersed in so short a time. There is, indeed, here no positive *proof* that they were not immersed; but the narrative is one of those incidental circumstances often much more satisfactory than philological discussion,

42 And ^a they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

a 1Cor.11.2. He.10.25.

that show the extreme improbability that all this was done by wholly immersing them in water. It may be further remarked that here is an example of very quick admission to the church. It was the first great work of grace under the gospel. It was the model of all revivals of religion. And it was doubtless intended that this should be a specimen of the manner in which the ministers of religion should conduct in regard to admissions to the Christian church. Prudence is indeed required; but this example furnishes no warrant for advising persons who profess their willingness to obey Jesus Christ, to delay uniting with the church. If persons give evidence of piety, of true hatred of sin, and of attachment to the Lord Jesus, they should unite themselves to his people without delay. ¶ *There were added.* To the company of disciples, or to the followers of Christ. ¶ *Souls.* Persons. Comp. 1 Pet. iii. 20. Gen. xii. 5. It is not affirmed that all this took place in one part of Jerusalem, or that it was all done at once; but it is probable that this was what was afterwards ascertained to be the fruit of this day's labour, the result of this revival of religion. This was the first effusion of the Holy Spirit under the preaching of the gospel; and it shows that such scenes are to be expected in the church, and that the gospel is fitted to work a rapid and mighty change in the hearts of men.

42. *And they continued steadfastly.* They persevered in, or they adhered to. This is the inspired record of the result. That any of these apostatized is nowhere recorded, and is not to be presumed. Though they had been suddenly converted, though suddenly admitted to the church, though exposed to much persecution and contempt, and many trials, yet the record is that they adhered to the doctrines and duties of the Christian religion. The word rendered *continued steadfastly*, *προσκατεροῦντες*, means attending on, remaining by his side, not leaving or forsaking him. ¶ *The apostles' doctrine.* This does not mean that they held or believed the *doctrines* of the apostles, though that was true; but it means that they adhered to, or attended on, their *teaching* or *instruction*. The word *doctrine* has now a technical sense, and means a collection and arrangement of

43 And fear came upon every soul : and many ^a wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

^a Mar. 16. 17.

abstract views supposed to be contained in the Bible. In the Scriptures the word means simply *teaching* ; and the expression here denotes that they continued to attend on their *instructions*. One evidence of conversion is a desire to be *instructed* in the doctrines and duties of religion, and a willingness to attend on the preaching of the gospel. ¶ *And fellowship*. The word rendered *fellowship*, κοινωνία, is often rendered *communion*. It properly denotes *having things in common*, or participation, society, friendship. It may apply to any thing which may be possessed in common, or in which all may partake. Thus all Christians have the same hope of heaven : the same joys ; the same hatred of sin ; the same enemies to contend with. Thus they have the same subjects of conversation, of feeling, and of prayer ; or they have communion in these things. And thus the early Christians had their property in common. The word here may apply to either or to all, to their conversation, their prayers, their dangers, or their property ; and means that they were *united* to the apostles, and participated with them in whatever befel them. It may be added that the effect of a revival of religion is to unite Christians more and more, and to bring those who were before separated to union and love. Christians feel that they are a band of brethren, and that however much they were separated *before* they became Christians, now they have great and important interests in common ; united in feelings, in interest, in dangers, in conflicts, in opinions, and in the hopes of a blessed immortality. ¶ *Breaking of bread*. The Syriac renders this 'the eucharist,' or the Lord's supper. It cannot, however, be determined whether this refers to their partaking of their ordinary food together ; or to feasts of charity ; or to the Lord's supper. The bread of the Hebrews was made commonly into cakes, thin, hard and brittle, so that it was *broken* instead of being cut. Hence, to denote intimacy or friendship, the phrase to *break bread together* would be very expressive, in the same way as the Greeks denoted it by *drinking together*, συμπόσιον. From the expression used in ver. 44, comp. with ver. 46, that they had all things common, it would rather seem to be implied that this referred to the participation of their

44 And all that believed were together, and ^b had all things common ;

^b c. 4. 32, 34.

ordinary meals. The action of *breaking bread* was commonly performed by the master or head of a family, immediately after asking a blessing. (*Lightfoot*.) ¶ *In prayers*. This was one *effect* of the influence of the Spirit, and an evidence of their change. A genuine revival will be always followed by a love of prayer.

43. *And fear came*. That is, there was great reverence or awe. The multitude had just before derided them (ver. 13) ; but so striking and manifest was the power of God on this occasion, that it silenced all clamours, and produced a general veneration and awe. The effect of a great work of God's grace is commonly to produce an unusual seriousness and solemnity in a community, even among those who are not convicted. It restrains, subdues, and silences opposition. ¶ *Every soul*. Every person, or individual ; that is, upon the people generally ; not only on those who became Christians, but upon the multitudes who witnessed these things. All things were fitted to produce this fear : the recent crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth ; the wonders that attended that event ; the events of the day of Pentecost ; and the miracles performed by the apostles, were all fitted to diffuse solemnity, and thought, and anxiety through the community. ¶ *Many wonders and signs*. See Note, ver. 22. This was promised by the Saviour. Mark xvi. 17. Some of the miracles which they wrought are specified in the following chapters.

44. *All that believed*. That is, that believed that Jesus was the Messiah ; for that was the distinguishing point by which they were known from others. ¶ *Were together*. ἐπιτοκῶν. Were united, were joined in the same thing. It does not mean that they *lived* in the same house, but they were *united in the same community* ; or engaged in *the same thing*. They were doubtless *often* together in the same place for prayer and praise. One of the best means for strengthening the faith of young converts is for them *often* to meet together for prayer, conversation, and praise. ¶ *Had all things common*. That is, all their *property* or *possessions*. See ch. iv. 32—37 ; v. 1—10. The apostles, in the time of the Saviour, evidently had all their property in common stock, and Judas was made their

45 And sold their possessions

a Is. 58. 7. 2Cor. 9. 1, 9. 1Jno. 3. 17.

treasurer. They regarded themselves as one family, having common wants; and there was no use or propriety in their possessing extensive property by themselves. Yet even then it is probable that *some* of them retained an interest in their property which was not supposed to be necessary to be devoted to the common use. It is evident that *John* thus possessed property which he retained. John xix. 27. And it is clear that the Saviour did not *command* them to give up their property into a common stock; nor did the apostles enjoin it. Acts v. 4, "While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?" It was therefore perfectly voluntary; and was evidently adapted to the peculiar circumstances of the early converts. Many of them came from abroad. They were from Parthia, and Media, and Arabia, and Rome, and Africa, &c. It is probable, also, that they now remained longer in Jerusalem than they had at first proposed. And it is not at all improbable that they would be denied now the usual hospitalities of the Jews, and excluded from their customary kindness, because they had embraced Jesus of Nazareth, who had been just put to death. In these circumstances, it was natural and proper that they should share together their property while they remained together.

45. *And sold.* That is, they sold as much as was necessary in order to procure the means of providing for the wants of each other. ¶ *Possessions.* Property, particularly *real* estate. This word, κτήματα, refers properly to their *fixed* property, as lands, houses, vineyards, &c. The word rendered *goods*, ὑπάρξεις, refers to their *personal* or moveable property. ¶ *And parted them to all.* They distributed them to supply the wants of their poorer brethren, according to their necessities. ¶ *As every man had need.* This expression *limits* and fixes the meaning of what is said before. The passage does not mean that they sold *all* their possessions, or that they relinquished their title to *all* their property; but that they so far regarded all as common as to be willing to part with it if it was needful to supply the wants of the others. Hence the property was laid at the disposal of the apostles, and they were desired to distribute it freely to meet the wants of the poor. ch. iv. 34, 35.

This was an important incident in the

and goods, and ^a parted them to all *men*, as every man had need.

early propagation of religion; and it may suggest many useful reflections.

1. We see the effect of religion. The love of property is one of the strongest affections which men have. There is nothing that will overcome it but religion. That will; and one of the *first* effects of the gospel was to loosen the hold of Christians on property.

2. It is the duty of the church to provide for the wants of its poor and needy members. There can be no doubt that property should now be regarded as *so far* common as that the wants of the poor should be supplied by those who are rich. Comp. Matt. xxvi. 11.

3. If it be asked *why* the early disciples evinced this readiness to part with their property in this manner, it may be replied, (1.) That the apostles had done it before them. The family of the Saviour had all things common. (2.) It was the nature of religion to do it. (3.) The circumstances of the persons assembled on this occasion were such as to require it. They were many of them from distant regions; and probably many of them of the poorer class of the people in Jerusalem. In this they evinced what *should* be done in behalf of the poor in the church at all times.

4. If it be asked whether this was done *commonly* among the early Christians, it may be replied, that there is no evidence that it was. It is mentioned here, and in ch. iv. 32—37, and ch. v. 1—7. It does not appear that it was done even by *all* who were afterwards converted in Judea; and there is no evidence that it was done in Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, Philippi, Rome, &c. That the effect of religion was to make men *liberal*, and willing to provide for the poor, there can be no doubt. See 2 Cor. viii. 19; ix. 2. 1 Cor. xvi. 2. Gal. ii. 10. But there is not proof that it was *common* to part with their possessions, and to lay it at the feet of the apostles. Religion does not contemplate, evidently, that men should break up all the arrangements in society; but it contemplates that those who *have* property should be ready and willing to part with it for the help of the poor and needy.

5. If it be asked whether all the arrangements of property should be broken up now, and believers have all things in common, we are prepared to answer, *No*. For, 1. This was an extraordinary case. 2. It was not even enjoined by the apostles on them. 3. It was practised nowhere

46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking¹ bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

¹ or, at home.

else. 4. It would be impracticable. No community where all things were in common has long prospered. It has been attempted often, by pagans, by infidels, and by fanatical sects of Christians. It ends soon in anarchy, and licentiousness, and idleness, and profligacy; or the more cunning secure the mass of the property, and control the whole. Till all men are *made alike*, there could be no hope of such a community; and if there could be, it would not be desirable. God evidently intended that men should be excited to industry by the hope of gain; and *then* he demands that their gains should be devoted to *his* service. Still, this was a noble instance of Christian generosity, and evinces the power of religion in loosening the hold which men commonly have on the world. It rebukes also those professors of religion, of whom, alas, there are many, who *give* nothing to benefit either the souls or bodies of their fellow-men.

46 *With one accord.* Comp. ch. i. 14; ii. 1. ¶ *In the temple.* This was the public place of worship; and the disciples were not disposed to leave the place where their fathers had so long worshipped God. This does not mean that they were *constantly* in the temple, but only at the customary hours of prayer; at 9 o'clock in the morning, and at 3 in the afternoon. ¶ *And breaking bread.* See Note, ver. 42. ¶ *From house to house.* In the margin, "at home." So the Syriac and Arabic. The common interpretation, however, is, that they did it in their various houses, now in this and now in that, as might be convenient. If it refers to their ordinary meals, then it means that they partook *in common* of what they possessed. And the expression in this verse, "did eat their meat," seems to imply that this refers to their common meals, and not to the Lord's supper. ¶ *Did eat their meat.* Did partake of their food. The word *meat* with us is applied to *flesh*. In the Bible, and in old English authors, it is applied to provision of any kind. Here it means all kinds of sustenance; that which nourished them—*τροφῆς*—and the use of this word *proves* that it does not refer to the Lord's supper; for that ordinance is nowhere represented as designed

47 Praising God, and having favour^a with all the people. And^b the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

a Lu. 2.52. Ro. 14.18.

b c. 5.14; 11.24.

for an ordinary meal, or to nourish the *body*. Comp. 1 Cor. xi. 33, 34. ¶ *With gladness.* With rejoicing. This is one of the effects of religion. It is far from gloom; it diffuses joy over the mind; and it bestows additional joy in the participation of even our ordinary pleasures. ¶ *Singleness of heart.* This means with a *sincere* and pure heart. They were satisfied and thankful. They were not perplexed or anxious; nor were they solicitous for the luxurious living, or aspiring after the vain objects of the men of the world. Comp. Rom. xii. 8. 2 Cor. i. 12. Col. iii. 22. Eph. vi. 5.

47. *Praising God.* See Luke xxiv. 53. ¶ *And having favour.* See Luke ii. 52. ¶ *With all the people.* That is, with the great mass of the people; with the people generally. It does not mean that all the people had become reconciled to Christianity; but their humble, serious, and devoted lives won the favour of the great mass of the community, and silenced opposition and cavil. This was a remarkable effect, but God has power to silence opposition; and there is nothing so well fitted to do this as the humble and consistent lives of his friends. ¶ *And the Lord added.* See ch. v. 14; xi. 24, &c. It was the *Lord* who did this. There was no power in man to do it; and the Christian loves to trace *all* increase of the church to the grace of God. ¶ *Added.* Caused, or inclined them to be joined to the church. ¶ *The church.* To the assembly of the followers of Christ. *ἐκκλησία*. The word *church* properly means those who are *called out*, and is applied to Christians as being *called out*, or separated from the world. It is used but three times in the Gospels. Matt. xvi. 18; xviii. 17. It occurs frequently in other parts of the New Testament, and usually as applied to the followers of Christ. Comp. Acts v. 11; vii. 38; viii. 1. 3; ix. 31; xi. 22. 26; xii. 1. 5, &c. It is used in classic writers to denote an *assembly* of any kind, and is twice thus used in the New Testament (Acts xix. 39. 41), where it is translated "assembly." ¶ *Such as should be saved.* This whole phrase is a translation of a participle, *τοῖς σωζομένοις*. It does not express any *purpose* that they *should* be saved, but simply the *fact* that

CHAPTER III.

NOW Peter and John went up together into the temple at ^a the hour of prayer, *being* the ninth hour.

2 And a certain man, lame from

^a Ps. 55, 17. Da. 6, 10.

they were those who *would be*, or who were about to be saved. It is clear, however, from this expression, that those who became members of the church were those who continued to adorn their profession, or who gave proof that they were sincere Christians. It is implied here, also, that those who are to be saved will join themselves to the church of God. This is every where required; and it constitutes *one* evidence of piety when they are willing to face the world, and give themselves at once to the service of the Lord Jesus.—Two remarks may be made on the last verse of this chapter; one is, that the effect of a consistent Christian life will be to command the *respect* of the world; and the other is, that the effect will be continually to increase the number of those who shall be saved. In this case they were *daily* added to it; the church was constantly increasing; and the same result may be expected in all cases where there is similar zeal, self-denial, consistency, and prayer.

We have now contemplated the foundation of the Christian church; and the first glorious revival of religion. This chapter deserves to be profoundly studied by all the ministers of the gospel, and by all who pray for the prosperity of the kingdom of God. It should excite our fervent gratitude that God has left this record of the first great work of grace; and our fervent prayers that he would multiply and extend such scenes until the earth shall be filled with his glory.

CHAPTER III.

1. *Peter and John went up*, &c. In Luke xxiv. 53, it is said that the apostles were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. From Acts ii. 46, it is clear that all the disciples were accustomed daily to resort to the temple for devotion. Whether they joined in the *sacrifices* of the temple-service is not said; but the thing is not improbable. This was the place and the manner in which they and their fathers had worshipped. They came slowly to the conclusion that they were to leave the *temple*; and they would naturally resort there with their countrymen to worship the God of their fathers. In the previous chapter (ii. 43), we are told in *general* that many wonders and

his mother's womb, was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate ^b of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;

^b Jno. 9, 8.

signs were done by the hands of the apostles. From the many miracles which were performed, Luke selects one, of which he gives a more full account; and especially as it gives him occasion to record another of the addresses of Peter to the Jews. An impostor would have been satisfied with the *general* statement that many miracles *were* performed. The sacred writers descend to particulars, and tell us where, and in relation to whom, they were performed. This is a proof that they were honest men, and did not intend to deceive. ¶ *Into the temple*. Not into the edifice properly called the temple, but into the *court* of the temple, where prayer was accustomed to be made. See Note, Matt. xxi. 12. ¶ *At the hour of prayer*, &c. The Jewish day was divided into twelve equal parts; of course, the ninth hour would be about three o'clock, P. M. This was the hour of evening prayer. Morning prayer was offered at nine o'clock. Comp. Ps. lv. 17. Dan. vi. 10.

2. *Lame*, &c. The mention of this shows that there was no deception in the case. The man had been always lame; he was obliged to be carried; and he was well known to the Jews. ¶ *Whom they laid daily*. That is, his friends laid him there *daily*. He would therefore be well known to those who were in the habit of entering the temple. Among the ancients there were no hospitals for the afflicted; and no alms-houses for the poor. The poor were dependent, therefore, on the charity of those who were in better circumstances. It became an important matter for them to be placed where they would see many people. Hence it was customary to place them at the gates of rich men (Luke xvi. 20); and they also sat by the side of the highway to beg where many persons would pass. Mark x. 46. Luke xviii. 35. John ix. 1—8. The entrance to the *temple* would be a favourable place for begging; for, (1.) great multitudes were accustomed to enter there; and (2.) when going up for the purposes of religion, they would be more inclined to give alms than at other times; and especially was this true of the Pharisees, who were particularly desirous of *publicity* in bestowing charity. It is re-

3 Who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked an alms.

4 And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us.

5 And he gave heed unto them,

corded by Martial (i. 112.), that this custom prevailed among the Romans of placing the poor by the gates of the temples; and the custom was also observed a long time in the Christian churches. ¶ *At the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful.* In regard to this gate there have been two opinions, one of which supposes that this was the gate commonly called *Nicanor*, which led from the court of the Gentiles to the court of the women (see Plan in Notes on Matt. xxi. 12); and the other, that it was the gate at the eastern entrance of the temple, commonly called *Susan*. It is not easy to determine which is intended; though from the fact that it occurred near Solomon's porch (ver. 11, comp. Plan of the temple, Matt. xxi. 12), it seems probable that the latter was intended. This gate was large and splendid. It was made of Corinthian brass, a most valuable metal, and made a magnificent appearance. *Josephus, Jewish War*, b. v. ch. v. § 3. ¶ *To ask alms.* Charity.

3. *Who, seeing Peter, &c.* There is no evidence that he was acquainted with them, or knew who they were. He asked of them as he was accustomed to do of the multitude that entered the temple.

4. *Fastening his eyes.* The word used here denotes to look *intently*, or with fixed attention. It is one of the peculiar words which *Luke* uses. *Luke* iv. 20; xxii. 56; *Acts* i. 10; iii. 12; vi. 15; vii. 55; x. 4, &c. in all twelve times. It is used by no other writer in the New Testament, except by Paul twice, *2 Cor.* iii. 7, 13. ¶ *Look on us.* All this was done to fix the attention. He wished to call the attention of the man distinctly to himself, and to what he was about to do. It was also done that the man might be fully apprised that his restoration to health came from him.

6. *Silver and gold have I none.* The man had asked for money; Peter assures him that he had not that to give; it was done, however, in such a way as to show his *willingness* to aid him, if he *had* possessed it. ¶ *Such as I have.* Such as is in my power. It is not to be supposed that he meant to say that he originated this power himself, but only that it was *intrusted* to him. He immediately adds

expecting to receive something of them.

6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none: but such as I have give I thee: In ^a the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.

a c. 4. 10.

that it was derived solely from the Lord Jesus Christ. ¶ *In the name.* Comp. ch. iv. 10. In *Mark* xvi. 17, 18, it is said, "These signs shall follow them that believe; *in my name* shall they cast out devils, &c.... they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." The expression means *by his authority*, or *in virtue of power derived from him*. We are here struck with a remarkable difference between the manner in which the Lord Jesus wrought miracles, and that in which it was done by his apostles. *He* did it in his *own name*, and by virtue of his own power. He claimed dominion over disease and death. The apostles never attempted to perform a miracle by their *own power*. It was only in the name of Jesus; and this circumstance alone shows that there was a radical difference between Christ and all other prophets and teachers. ¶ *Of Nazareth.* This was the name by which he was commonly known. By this name he had been designated among the Jews, and on the cross. It is by no means improbable that the man had heard of him by this name; and it was important that he should understand that it was by the authority of him who had been crucified as an impostor. ¶ *Rise and walk.* To do this would be evidence of signal power. It is remarkable that in cases like this, they were commanded to do the thing at once. See similar cases in *John* v. 8. *Matt.* ix. 6; xii. 13. It would have been easy to allege that they had *no power*, that they were lame, or sick, or palsied, and could do nothing until God should give them strength. But the command was *to do the thing*; nor did the Saviour or the apostles stop to convince them that they *could* do nothing. They did not doubt that if it were done, they would ascribe the power to God. Precisely like this is the condition of the sinner. God commands him *to do the thing*; to repent, and believe, and lead a holy life: It is not merely to *attempt* to do it; to make use of means; or to wait on him; but it is *actually to repent and believe* the gospel. Where he may obtain power to do it is another question. It is easy for him to involve himself in difficulty, as it

7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted *him* up: and immediately his feet and ankle-bones received strength.

8 And he, leaping ^a up, stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

a 1s.35.6.

would have been in these cases. But the command of God is positive, and must be obeyed. If not obeyed, men must perish; just as this man would have been always lame if he had put forth no effort of his own. When done, a convicted sinner will do just as this man did, *instinctively give all the praise to God.* ver. 8.

7. *And he took him.* He took hold of his hand. To take hold of the hand in such a case was an offer of aid, an indication that Peter was sincere, and was an inducement to him to make an effort. This may be employed as a beautiful illustration of the manner of God when he commands men to repent and believe. He does not leave them alone; he extends help, and aids their efforts. If they tremble, and feel that they are weak, and needy, and helpless, his hand is stretched out, and his power exerted to impart strength and grace. ¶ *His feet and ankle-bones.* The fact that strength was immediately imparted; that the feet, long lame, were now made strong, was a full and clear proof of miraculous power.

8. *And he, leaping up.* This was a natural expression of joy; and it was a striking fulfilment of the prophecy in Isa. xxxv. 6: "Then shall the lame man leap as an hart." The account here given is one that is perfectly natural. The man would be filled with joy, and would express it in this manner. He had been lame from a child; he had never walked; and there was more in the miracle than merely giving *strength*. The act of *walking* is one that is acquired by long practice. Children learn slowly. *Casper Hauser*, lately discovered in one of the cities of Germany, who had been confined in prison from a child, was unable to walk in an easy way when released, but stumbled in a very awkward manner. (See his Life.) When, therefore, this man was able at once to walk, it was clear proof of a miracle. ¶ *Praising God.* This was the natural and appropriate expression of his feelings on this occasion. His heart would be full; and he could have no doubt that this blessing had come from

9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God:

10 And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

God alone. It is remarkable that he did not even express his gratitude to Peter and John. They had not pretended to restore him in their own name; and he would feel that man could not do it. It is remarkable that he praised God without being *taught* or entreated to do it. It was instinctive—the natural feeling of the heart. So a sinner. His first feelings when renewed, will be to ascribe the praise to God. While he may and will feel regard for the ministry by whose instrumentality he has received the blessing, yet his main expression of gratitude will be to God. And this he will do instinctively; he needs no prompter; he knows that no power of man is equal to the work of converting the soul, and will rejoice, and give all the praise to the God of grace.

9, 10. *And all the people, &c.* The people who had been accustomed to see him sit in a public place. ¶ *And they knew, &c.* In this they could not be deceived; they had seen him a long time, and now they saw the same man expressing his praise to God for complete recovery. The particulars in this miracle are the following; and they are as far as possible from any appearance of imposture. 1. The man had been afflicted from a child. This was known to all the people. At this time he was forty years of age. ch. iv. 22. 2. He was not an impostor. If he had *pretended* lameness, it is wonderful that he had not been detected before, and not have been suffered to occupy a place thus in the temple. 3. The apostles had no agency in placing him there. They had not seen him before. There was manifestly no *collusion* or *agreement* with him to attempt to impose on the people. 4. The man himself was convinced of the miracle; and did not doubt that the power by which he had been healed was of God. 5. The *people* were convinced of the same thing. They saw the effects; they had known him well; they had had every opportunity to know that he was diseased; and they were now satisfied that he was restored. There was no possi-

11 And, as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them, in the porch ^a that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

12 And when Peter saw *it*, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this?

a Jno. 10. 23. c. 5. 12.

bility of deception in the case. It was not merely the *friends* of Jesus that saw this; not those who had an *interest* in the miracle, but those who had been his enemies, and who had just before been engaged in putting him to death. Let this miracle be compared, in these particulars, with those *pretended* miracles which have been affirmed to have been wrought in defence of other systems of religion, and it will be seen at once that here is every appearance of sincerity, honesty, and truth; and in them every mark of deception, fraud, and imposition. (See Paley's Evidences of Christianity, Proposition ii. ch. ii.)

11. *Held Peter and John.* The word *held* means he *adhered* to them; he joined himself to them; he was desirous of remaining with them, and participating with them. ¶ *All the people, &c.* Excited by curiosity, they came together. The fact of the cure, and the conduct of the man, would soon draw together a crowd, and thus furnish a favourable opportunity for preaching to them the gospel. ¶ *In the porch, &c.* This *porch* was a covered way or passage on the east side of the temple. It was distinguished for its magnificence. See the Plan and description of the temple, Notes on Matt. xxi. 12.

12. *When Peter saw it.* Saw the people assembling in such multitudes and wondering at the miracle. ¶ *He answered.* The word *answer*, with us, implies that a question had been asked, or that some subject had been proposed for consideration. But the word is used in a different sense in the Bible. It is often used when no question was asked, but when an *occasion* was offered for remarks, or where an opportunity was presented to make a statement. It is the same as replying *to a thing*, or making *a statement* in regard to some subject. Dan. ii. 26. Acts v. 8. ¶ *Ye men of Israel.* Jews. Comp. ch. ii.

14. ¶ *Why marvel ye at this?* The particular thing which he intended to reprove here, was not that they *wondered*, for that was proper; but that they *looked*

or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own ^b power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

13 The God ^c of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, ^d hath glorified ^e his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and

b 2 Cor. 3. 5.

c Matt. 22. 32.

d c. 5. 30, 31.

e Jno. 17. 1. Ep. 1. 20-22. Ph. 2. 9-11. He. 2. 9. Re. 1. 5, 18.

on Peter and John as if they had been the authors of this healing. It ought not to be a matter of wonder. The Jews were sufficiently acquainted with miracles to interpret them, and to know whence they proceeded; and they ought not, therefore, to ascribe them to *man*, but to inquire *why* they had been wrought *by God*. ¶ *Why look ye, &c.* Why do ye fix the eyes with amazement *on us*, as though *we* could do this? Why not look at once to God? ¶ *By our own power.* By any *art of healing*, or by any medicine, we had done this. ¶ *Or holiness.* Piety. As if God had bestowed this on us on account of our personal and eminent piety. It may be remarked, that here was ample opportunity for them to establish a reputation of their own. The people were disposed to pay them honours; they *might* at once have laid claim to vast authority over them; but they refused all such personal honours, and ascribed all to the Lord Jesus. Whatever success may attend the ministers of the gospel; or however much the world may be disposed to do them honour; they should disclaim all power in themselves, and ascribe it to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not by the talents or personal holiness of ministers, valuable as these are, that men are saved; it is only by the power of God, designed to honour his Son. See 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6.

13. *The God of Abraham.* He is called the God of Abraham because Abraham *acknowledged* him as his God, and because God showed himself to be his friend. Comp. Matt. xxii. 32. Ex. iii. 6. 15. Gen. xxviii. 13; xxvi. 24. It was important to show that it was the *same* God who had done this that had been acknowledged by their fathers; and that they were not about to introduce the worship of any other God. And it was especially important, because the promise had been made to Abraham, that in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed. Gen. xii. 3. Comp. Gal. iii. 16. ¶ *Hath glorified.* Has honoured. *You* denied, despised and murdered him; but God has exalted

denied ^a him in the presence of Pilate, when he ^b was determined to let him go.

14 But ye denied the Holy ^c One and the Just, ^d and desired a murderer to be granted unto you;

^a Jno. 19. 15.

^b Matt. 27. 17-25. Lu. 23. 16-23.

^c Ps. 16. 10. Lu. 1. 35.

^d c. 7. 52; 22. 14.

and honoured him. This miracle was done in the *name* of Jesus. ver. 6. It was the *power* of God that had restored him; and by putting forth this power God had shown that he approved the work of his Son, and was disposed to honour him in the view of men. Comp. John xvii. 1. Eph. i. 20-22. Phil. ii. 9-11. Heb. ii. 9. Rev. i. 5-18. ¶ *Ye delivered up.* That is, you delivered him to the Romans to be put to death. See Note, ch. ii. 23. ¶ *And denied him in the presence of Pilate.* Denied that he was the Messiah. Were unwilling to own him as your long-expected King. John xix. 15. ¶ *When he was determined,* &c. Matt. xxvii. 17-25. Luke xxiii. 16-23. Pilate was satisfied of his innocence; but he was weak, and timid, and irresolute, and yielded to their wishes. The fact that *Pilate* regarded him as innocent was a strong aggravation of their crime. They should have regarded him as innocent; but they urged on his condemnation, against the deliberate judgment of him before whom they had arraigned him; and thus showed how obstinately they were resolved on his death.

14. *The holy One, &c.* See Ps. xvi. 10. Comp. Note, Acts ii. 27. ¶ *And the just.* The word *just* here denotes *innocent*, or one who was free from crime. It properly is used in reference to *law*, and denotes one who stands upright in the view of the law, or who is not chargeable with crime. In this sense the Lord Jesus was not only *personally* innocent, but even before his judges he stood unconvicted of any crime. The crime charged on him at first was *blasphemy* (Matt. xxvi. 65); and on this charge the Sanhedrim had condemned him, without proof. But of this charge Pilate would not take cognizance, and hence *before him* they charged him with sedition. Luke xxiii. 2. Neither of these charges were made out; and, of course, in the eye of the law he was innocent and just. It greatly aggravated their crime that they demanded his death still, even *after* it was ascertained that they could prove nothing against him; thus showing that it was mere hatred and malice that led them to seek his death.

15 And killed the ¹ Prince of life, whom God hath raised ^e from the dead; whereof ^f we are witnesses.

16 And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know;

¹ or, *author.* Jno. 1. 4. 1 Jno. 5. 11.

^e Matt. 28. 2-5. Ep. 1. 20. ^f c. 2. 32.

¶ *And desired a murderer.* Matt. xxvii. 21.

15. *And killed the Prince of Life.* The word rendered *prince* denotes properly a *military leader* or commander. Hence, in Heb. ii. 10, it is translated *captain*; "It became him . . . to make the *Captain* of their salvation perfect through sufferings." As a captain or commander leads on to victory, and is said to obtain it, so the word comes to denote one who is the *cause*, the *author*, the *procurer*, &c. In this sense it is used, Acts v. 31, "Him hath God exalted to be a *Prince* and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel," &c. In Heb. xii. 2, it is properly rendered *author*; "Looking unto Jesus, the *author* and finisher of our faith." The word *author*, or giver, would express the meaning of the word here. It also implies that he has *dominion* over life; an idea, indeed, which is essentially connected with that of his being the author of it. The word *life* here is used in a large sense, as denoting *all* manner of life. In this sense it is used in reference to Christ in John i. 4, "In him was *life*," &c. Comp. John v. 26. 1 John v. 11. 1 Cor. xv. 45. Jesus is here called the *Prince of life* in contrast with him whom the Jews demanded in his place, Barabbas. He was a *murderer* (Luke xxiii. 19. Mark xv. 7), one who had *destroyed life*; and yet they demanded that he whose character it was to *destroy life* should be released, and the *Author of life* to be put to death. ¶ *Whom God hath raised,* &c. ch. ii. 24. 32.

16. *And his name.* The *name* of Jesus is here put for Jesus himself; and it is the same as saying, "and he," &c. In this way the word *name* is often used by the Hebrews, especially when speaking of God. Acts i. 15; iv. 12. Eph. i. 21. Rev. iii. 4. It does not mean that there was any efficacy in the mere *name* of Jesus that should heal the man, but that it was done by his authority and power. ¶ *Through faith in his name.* By means of faith in him; that is, by the faith which Peter and John had in Jesus. It does not refer to any faith that the man had himself, for there is no evidence that he believed in him. But it was by means

yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

17 And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ^a ye did *it*, as *did* also your rulers.

α Lu.23.34. Jno.16.3. 1Cor.2.8

of the faith which the apostles exercised in him that the miracle was wrought, and was thus a fulfilment of the declaration in Matt. xvii. 20, "If ye have faith . . . ye shall say to this mountain, remove hence," &c. This truth Peter repeats two or three times in the verse to impress it more distinctly on the minds of his hearers. ¶ *Whom ye see and know.* There could therefore be no mistake. He was well known to them. There was no doubt about the truth of the miracle (ch. iv. 16), and the only inquiry was in what way it had been done. This Peter affirms to have been accomplished *only* by the power of the Lord Jesus. ¶ *Perfect soundness.* ὁλοκληρίαν. This word is not used elsewhere in the New Testament. It denotes *integrity of parts, freedom from any defect*; and it here means that the cure was perfect and entire, or that he was *completely* restored to the use of his limbs. ¶ *In the presence of you all.* You are all witnesses of it, and can judge for yourselves. This shows how confident the apostles were that a *real* miracle had been performed. They were willing that it should be examined; and this is conclusive proof that there was no attempt at imposture. A deceiver, or one who pretended to work miracles, would have been *cautious* of exposing the subject to the danger of detection.

17. *And now, brethren.* Though they had been guilty of a crime so enormous, yet Peter shows the tenderness of his heart in addressing them still as his *brethren*. He regarded them as of the same nation with himself, as having the same hopes, and as being entitled to the same privileges. The expression also shows that he was not disposed to exalt himself as being by nature more holy than they. This verse is a remarkable instance of *tenderness* in appealing to sinners. It would have been easy to have reproached them for their enormous crimes; but it was not the way to reach the heart. He had indeed stated and *proved* their wickedness. The object now was to bring them to repentance for it; and this was to be done by *tenderness, and kindness, and love*. Men are melted to contrition, not by *reproaches*, but by *love*. ¶ *I wot.* I know; I am well apprized of it. I know you will affirm it; and I admit that it was so. Still the enormous deed

has been done. It cannot be recalled; and it cannot be innocent. It remains, therefore, that you should repent of it, and seek for pardon. ¶ *That through ignorance, &c.* Peter does not mean to affirm that they were *innocent* in having put him to death, for he had just proved the contrary; and he immediately proceeds to exhort them to repentance. But he means to say that their offence was *mitigated* by the fact that they were ignorant that he was the Messiah. The same thing the Saviour himself affirmed when dying. Luke xxiii. 34. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Comp. Acts xiii. 27. 1 Cor. ii. 8. The same thing the apostle Paul affirmed in relation to himself, as one of the reasons why he obtained pardon from the enormous crime of persecution. 1 Tim. i. 13. In cases like these, though crime might be *mitigated*, yet it was not taken entirely away. They were guilty of demanding a man to be murdered who was declared innocent; they were urged on with ungovernable fury; they did it from contempt and malice; and the crime of *murder* remained, though they were ignorant that he was the Messiah. It is plainly implied that if they had put him to death *knowing* that he was the Messiah, and *as the Messiah*, there would have been no forgiveness. Comp. Heb. x. 26—29. Ignorance, therefore, is a circumstance which must always be taken into view in an estimate of crime. It is at the same time true, that they had opportunity to know that he was the Messiah; but the *mere fact* that they were ignorant of it, was still a mitigating circumstance in the estimate of their crime. There can be no doubt that the *mass* of the people had no fixed belief that he was the Messiah. ¶ *As did also your rulers.* Comp. 1 Cor. ii. 8, where the apostle says that none of the princes of this world knew the wisdom of the gospel, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. It is certain that the *leading* Scribes and Pharisees were urged on by the most ungovernable fury and rage to put Jesus to death, even when they had abundant opportunity to know his true character. This was particularly the case with the high-priest. But yet it was true that they did not *believe* that he was the Mes-

18 But those ^a things which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

^a Lu.24.44. c.26.22,23.

siah. Their minds had been prejudiced. They had expected a prince and a conqueror. All their views of the Messiah were different from the character which Jesus manifested. And though they *might* have known that he was the Messiah; though he had given abundant proof of the fact, yet it is clear that they did not believe it. It is not credible that they *would* have put to death one whom they *really* believed to be the Christ. He was the hope, the only hope of their nation; and they would not have dared to imbrue their hands in the blood of him whom they really believed to be the illustrious personage so long promised, and expected by their fathers. It was also probably true that no small part of the Sanhedrim was urged on by the zeal and fury of the chief-priests. They had not courage to resist them; and yet they *might* not have entered heartily into this work of persecution and death. Comp. John vii. 50—53. The speech of Peter, however, is not intended to free them entirely from blame; nor should it be pressed to show that they were innocent. It is a mitigating circumstance thrown in to show them that there was still *hope of mercy*.

18. *But those things.* To wit, those things that *did* actually occur, pertaining to the life and death of the Messiah. ¶ *Had showed.* Had announced, or foretold. ¶ *By the mouth of all his prophets.* That is, by the prophets in general, without affirming that *each* individual prophet had a distinct prediction respecting this. The prophets *taken together*, or the prophecies *as a whole*, had declared this. The word *all* is not unfrequently used in this somewhat limited sense. Mark i. 37. John iii. 26. In regard to the prophecies respecting Christ, see Note, Luke xxiv. 27. ¶ *Hath so fulfilled.* He has caused to be fulfilled *in this manner*; that is, by the rejection, denial, and wickedness of the rulers. It has *turned out* to be in strict accordance with the prophecy. This fact Peter uses in exhorting them to repentance; but it is not to be regarded as an *excuse* for their sins. The mere fact that all this was foretold, that it was in accordance with the purposes and predictions of God, does not take away the

19 Repent ^b ye therefore, and be converted, ^c that your sins may be ^d blotted out, when the times of refreshing ^e shall come from the presence of the Lord;

^b c.2.38. ^c Is. i. 16-20. Joel 2.13. ^d Is. 43.25. ^e Jer. 31.23-25. Zep. 3.14-20. Re. 21.4.

guilt of it, or constitute an excuse for it. In regard to this, we may remark, (1.) The prediction did not change the *nature* of the act. The mere fact that it was *foretold*, or foreknown, did not change its character. See Note, ch. ii. 23. (2.) Peter still regarded them as guilty. He did not urge the fact that this was foreknown as an excuse for their sin, but to show them that *since* all this happened according to the prediction and the purpose of God, they had hope in his mercy. The plan was that the Messiah should die to make a way for pardon; and, therefore, they *might* have hope in his mercy. (3.) This was a signal instance of the power and mercy of God in overruling the wicked conduct of men to further his purposes and plans. (4.) All the other sins of men *may* thus be overruled, and thus the wrath of man may be made to praise him. But, (5.) This will constitute no excuse for the sinner. It is no part of his *intention* to honour God, or to advance his purposes; and there is no direct *tendency* in his crimes to advance his glory. The direct tendency of his deeds is counteracted and overruled; and God brings good out of the evil. But this surely constitutes no excuse for the sinner.

If it be asked why Peter insisted on this, if he did not mean that it should be regarded as an *excuse* for their sin; I reply, that it was his design to prove *that Jesus was the Messiah*, and having proved this, he could assure them that there was mercy. Not because they had not been guilty; not because they *deserved* favour; but because *the fact* that the Messiah had come was an argument that *any* sinners might obtain mercy, as he immediately proceeds to show them.

19. *Repent ye.* Note, Matt. iii. 2. ¶ *Therefore.* Because of your sin in putting Jesus to death; and *because* he is the Messiah, and God through him is willing to show mercy to the chief of sinners. ¶ *And be converted.* This expression conveys an idea not at all to be found in the original. It conveys the idea of *passivity*, *be converted*, as if they were to yield to some foreign influence that they were now resisting. But the idea of being *passive* in this, is not conveyed by the origi-

nal word. The word means properly to *turn*; to return to a path from which one has gone astray; and then to turn away from sins, or to forsake them. It is a word used in a general sense to denote the whole *turning* to God. That the form of the word here (*ἐπιστρεφίζετε*) does not denote *passivity* may be clearly seen by referring to the following places, where the same form of the word is used. Matt. xxiv. 18. Mark xiii. 16. Luke xvii. 31. 1 Thess. i. 9: The expression, therefore, would have been more appropriately rendered "*repent, and turn, that your sins,*" &c. *To be converted* cannot be a matter of obligation; but to *turn* to God is the duty of every sinner. The crimes of which he exhorted them to repent were those pertaining to the death of the Lord Jesus, as well as all the past sins of their life. They were to turn from the course of wickedness in which they and the nation had been so long walking. ¶ *That your sins, &c.* In order that your sins may be forgiven. Sin cannot be pardoned before man repents of it. In the order of the work of grace, repentance must always precede pardon. Of course, no man can have evidence that his sin is pardoned until he repents. Comp. Isa. i. 16—20. Joel ii. 13. ¶ *May be blotted out.* May be forgiven, or pardoned. The expression, *to blot out sins*, occurs also in Isa. xlvi. 25. Ps. li. 1. 9. Jer. xviii. 23. Neh. iv. 5. Isa. xlv. 22. The expression, *to blot out a name*, is applied to expunging it from a *roll, or catalogue, or list*, as of an army, &c. Ex. xxxii. 32, 33. Deut. ix. 14; xxv. 19; xxix. 29, &c. The expression, *to blot out sins*, is taken from the practice of creditors charging their debtors, and when the debt was paid, cancelling it, or wholly removing the record. The word used here *properly* refers to the practice of writing on tables covered with wax, and then by inverting the stylus, or instrument of writing, smoothing the wax again, and thus removing every trace of the record. This more entirely expresses the idea of *pardoning*, than *blotting* does. It means wholly to *remove* the record, the charge, and every trace of the account against us. In this way God forgives sins. ¶ *When the times, &c.* The word *ὅταν*, rendered "when," is commonly rendered *that*, and denotes the *final cause*, or the *reason* why a thing is done. Matt. ii. 6; v. 16. 45, &c. By many it has been supposed to have this sense here, and to mean "repent.... in order that the times of refreshing may come," &c. Thus Kuinöil, Grotius, Lightfoot, the Syriac version, &c. If used in this sense, it means that their repentance

and forgiveness would be the *means* of introducing peace and joy. Others have rendered it in accordance with our translation, "when," meaning that they might find peace in the day when Christ should return to judgment; which return would be to them a day of *rest*, though of terror to the wicked. Thus Calvin, Beza, the Latin Vulgate, Schleusner, &c. The *grammatical* construction will admit of either, though the former is more in accordance with the usual use of the word. The objection to the former is, that it is not easy to see how their repenting, &c. should be the *means* of introducing the times of refreshing. And this, also, corresponds very little with the *design* of Peter in this discourse. That was to *encourage* them to repentance; to adduce arguments why they should repent; and why they might hope in his mercy. To do this, it was needful only to assure them that they were living under the times graciously promised by God, the times of refreshing, when pardon might be obtained. The main inquiry, therefore, is, what did Peter refer to by *the times of refreshing*, and by the *restitution of all things*? Did he refer to any particular manifestation to be made then; or to the influence of the gospel on the earth; or to the future state, when the Lord Jesus shall come to judgment? The idea which I suppose Peter intended to convey was this: 'Repent, and be converted. You have been great sinners, and are in danger. Turn from your ways, that your sins may be forgiven.' But then, what encouragement would there be for this? or why should it be done? Answer. 'You are living under the times of the gospel, the reign of the Messiah, the times of refreshing. This happy, glorious period has been long anticipated, and is to continue to the close of the world, the period *including* the restitution of all things, and the return of Christ to judgment, has come; and is, therefore, the period when you may find mercy, and when you *should* seek it, to be prepared for his return.' In this sense the passage refers to the fact that this time, this dispensation, this economy, *including all this*, had come, and they were living under it, and *might* and *should* seek for mercy. It expresses, therefore, the *common belief of the Jews* that such a time *should* come, and the comment of *Peter* about its nature and continuance. The belief of the Jews was that such times *should* come. Peter affirms that the belief of such a period was well-founded—a time when mercy may be obtained. That time *has come*.

20 And he ^a shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you :

^a c. 1. 11. He. 9. 28.

The doctrine that it *should* come was well-founded, and has been fulfilled. This was a reason why they should repent, and hope in the mercy of God. Peter goes on, then, to state further *characteristics* of that period. It should include the restitution of all things, the return of Christ to judgment, &c. And *all this* was an additional consideration why they should repent, and turn from their sins, and seek for forgiveness. The meaning of the passage may, therefore, be thus summed up: 'Repent, *since* such times *shall* come; they are clearly predicted; they were to be expected; and you are now living under them. *In these times*; in this dispensation, also, God shall send his Son again to judge the world; and all things shall be closed and settled for ever. Since you live under this period, you may seek for mercy; and you *should* seek to avoid the vengeance due to the wicked, and to be admitted to heaven when the Lord Jesus shall return.' ¶ *Times of refreshing.* The word rendered *refreshing*, *ζωοψύξις*, means properly the *breathing*, or *refreshment*, after being *heated* with labour, *running*, &c. It hence denotes any kind of refreshment, as rest, or deliverance from evils of any kind. It is used nowhere else in the New Testament, except that the *verb* is used in 2 Tim. i. 16, "Onesiphorus... oft *refreshed* me, and was not ashamed of my chain." He administered comfort to me in my trials. It is used by the LXX. in the Old Testament nine times. Ex. viii. 15, "But when Pharaoh saw that there was *respite*," i. e. cessation or rest from the plagues. Hos. xii. 8. Jer. xlix. 30. Ps. lxxix. 11, &c. In no place in the Old Testament is the *word* applied to the terms of the gospel. The *idea*, however, that the times of the Messiah would be times of *rest*, and *ease*, and *prosperity*, was a favourite one among the Jews, and was countenanced in the Old Testament. See Isa. xxviii. 12, "To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the *refreshing*," &c. They anticipated the times of the gospel as a period when they should have rest from their enemies; a respite from the evils of oppression and war, and a period of great national prosperity and peace. Under the idea that the *happy times of the Messiah* had come, Peter now addresses them, and assures them that

21 Whom the heavens must receive until the times ^b of restitution of all things, which God hath

^b Matt. 17. 11.

they might obtain pardon and peace. ¶ *Shall come.* This does not mean that this period was *still future*, for it had come; but that the expectation of the Jews that such a Messiah should come was well-founded. A remarkably similar construction we have concerning Elijah (Matt. xvii. 11), "And Jesus answered and said, Elias truly *shall first come*, and restore," &c.; that is, the doctrine that Elijah should come was true; though he immediately adds that it *had already* taken place, ver. 12. See Note on the place. ¶ *From the presence of the Lord.* Greek, "from the face of the Lord." The expression means that God was *its author*. From the face of the Lord means from *the Lord himself*. Mark i. 2, "I send thy messenger *before thy face*," i. e. before thee. Comp. Mal. iii. 1. Luke i. 76; ii. 31.

20. And he shall send, &c. ch. i. 11. Under this *economy of things*, he shall send Jesus Christ, i. e. the Messiah, to teach men; to redeem them; to save them; to judge the world; to gather his people to himself; and to condemn the wicked. Under this *economy* they were then. This, therefore, was an argument why they should repent and turn to God, that they might escape in the day of judgment. ¶ *Which before was preached*, &c. Who has been proclaimed as the Messiah. The name *Jesus Christ* is equivalent here to the *Messiah*. The *Messiah* had been proclaimed to the Jews as about to come. In his time was to be the period of refreshing. He *had* come; and they were under the economy in which the blessings of the Messiah were to be enjoyed. This does not refer to his personal ministry, or to the preaching of the apostles; but to the fact that the Messiah had been a long time *announced* to them by the prophets as about to come. All the prophets had *preached* him, as the hope of the nation. It may be remarked, however, that there is here a difference in the manuscripts. A large majority of them read *προεχρησμενον*, who was *designated* or *appointed*, instead of who was preached. This reading is approved by Griesbach, Knapp, Bengel, &c. It was followed in the ancient Syriac, the Arabic, &c. and is undoubtedly the true reading.

21. Whom the heaven must receive. The common belief of the Jews was, that the Messiah would reign on the earth for

spoken ^a by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

^a Lu. i. 70.

ever. John xii. 34. On this account they would object that Jesus could not be the Messiah; and hence it became so important for the apostles to establish the fact that he had ascended to heaven. The evidence which they adduced was the fact that they *saw* him ascend. Acts i. 9. The meaning of the expression "whom the heaven must receive," is that it was *fit* or *proper* (*δσι*) that he should ascend. One reason of that fitness or propriety he himself stated in John xvi. 7, comp. xvii. 2. It was also *fit* or expedient that he should do it, to direct the affairs of the universe for the welfare of the church (Eph. i. 20—22), and that he should exercise there his office as a priest in interceding for his people. 1 John ii. 1, 2. Heb. vii. 25; ix. 24. Rom. viii. 34, &c. It is remarkable that Peter did not adduce any passage of Scripture on this subject; but it was one of the points on which there was no clear revelation. Obscure intimations of it might be found in Ps. cx. xvi. &c. but the fact that he should *ascend* to heaven was not made prominent in the Old Testament. The words "whom the heaven must receive," also convey the idea of *exaltation* and *power*; and Peter doubtless intended to say that he was clothed with power, and exalted to honour in the presence of God. See Ps. cxv. 3, comp. 1 Pet. iii. 22, "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." Note, Acts ii. 33. ¶ *Until*. This word implies that he would then *return* to the earth; but it does not imply that he would not again ascend to heaven. ¶ *The times of the restitution of all things*. The noun rendered *restitution* (ἀποκαταστήσεως) does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. The *verb* from which it is derived occurs eight times. It means properly to *restore a thing to its former situation*, as restoring a *sprained* or *dislocated* limb to its former soundness. Hence it is used to restore, or to *heal*, in the New Testament. Matt. xii. 13, "And it (the hand) was *restored whole* as the other." Mark iii. 5. Luke vi. 10. And hence it is applied to the *preparation* or *fitness* for the coming of the Messiah which was to attend the preaching of John in the character of Elias. Matt. xvii. 11. Mark ix. 12. Thus in Josephus (Antiq. ii. 3. 8), the word is used to denote the return of the Jews from the captivity of Babylon, and their restoration

22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A ^b Prophet shall the Lord

^b De. 18. 15—19.

to their former state and privileges. The word has also the idea of *consummation*, *completion*, or *filling up*. Thus it is used in Philo, Hesychius, Phavorinus, and by the Greek classics. (See Lightfoot and Kuinoel.) Thus it is used here by the Syriac. "Until the *complement* or *filling up* of the times;" that is, of all the events foretold by the prophets, &c. Thus the Arabic. "Until the times which shall establish the perfection or completion of all the predictions of the prophets," &c. In this sense the passage means that the heavens must receive the Lord Jesus until all things spoken by the prophets in relation to his work, his reign, the spread of the gospel, the triumph of religion, &c. shall have been fulfilled. It also conveys the idea of the predicted recovery of the world from sin, and the restoration of peace and order; the *consummation* of the work of the Messiah, now begun, but not yet complete; slow it may be in its advances, but triumphant and certain in its progress, and its close. ¶ *All things*. All things which have been foretold by the prophets. The expression is limited by the connexion to this; and of course it does not mean that all men shall be saved, or that all the evils of sin can be repaired or remedied. This can never be, for the mischief is done, and cannot be undone; but every thing which the prophets have foretold shall receive their completion and fulfilment. ¶ *Which God hath spoken*. Which have been revealed, and are recorded in the Old Testament. ¶ *Of all his holy prophets*. This does not mean that each one of the prophets had spoken of these things; but that all which *had been spoken* should be fulfilled. ¶ *Since the world began*. This is an expression denoting the same as *from the beginning*, meaning to affirm with emphasis that *all* the prophecies should be fulfilled. The apostles were desirous to show that they, as well as the Jews, held entirely to the prophets, and taught no doctrine which they had not taught before them.

22. For Moses truly said. The authority of Moses among the Jews was absolute and final. It was of great importance, therefore, to show not only that they were not *departing* from his law, but that he had actually *foretold* these very things. The object of the passage is not to prove that the heavens must receive him, but that he was truly the Messiah. ¶ *Unto the fathers*. To their ancestors, or the

your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall

ye hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you.

founders of the nation. See Deut. xviii. 15—19. ¶ *A prophet.* Literally, one who foretels future events. But it is also used to denote a religious teacher in general. See Rom. xii. 6. In this place it is evidently used in a large sense, to denote one who should infallibly guide and direct the nation in its religious affairs; one who should be commissioned by God to do this, in opposition to the *diviners* (ver. 14) on which other nations relied. The meaning of this passage in Deuteronomy is apparent from the connexion. Moses is stating to them (ver. 1—8) the duty and office of the priests and Levites. He then cautions them against conforming to the surrounding nations, particularly on the subject of religious instruction and guidance. They, said he, consult, in times of perplexity, with enchanters, and charmers, and necromancers, and wizards, &c. (ver. 11—14), but it shall not be so with you. You shall not be left to this false and uncertain guidance in times of perplexity and danger; for the Lord will raise up, from time to time, a *prophet*, a man directly commissioned in an extraordinary manner from heaven, like me, who shall direct and counsel you. The promise, therefore, pertains to the *series of prophets* which God would raise up; or it is a promise that God would send his prophets, as occasion might demand, to instruct and counsel the nation. The *design* was to keep them from consulting with diviners, &c. and to preserve them from following the pretended and false religious teachers of surrounding idolatrous people. In this interpretation most commentators agree. See particularly *Calvin* on this place. Thus explained, the prophecy had no *exclusive* or even *direct* reference to the Messiah, and there is no evidence that the Jews understood it to have any such reference, except as *one of the series of prophets* that God would raise up and send to instruct the nation. If then it be asked *on what principle* Peter appealed to this, we may reply, (1.) That the Messiah was to sustain the character of a prophet, and the prophecy had reference to him as *one of the teachers* that God would raise up to instruct the nation. (2.) It would apply to him *by way of eminence*, as the *greatest* of the messengers that God would send to instruct the people. In this sense it is probable that the Jews would understand it. (3.) This was one of those *emergencies* in the history of the nation

when they might expect such an intervention. The prophecy implied that in times of perplexity and danger, God would raise up such a prophet. Such a time then existed. The nation was corrupt, distracted, subjected to a foreign power, and *needed* such a teacher and guide. If it be asked *why* Peter appealed to this, rather than to *explicit* prophecies of the Messiah, we may remark, (1.) That his main object was to show their *guilt* in having rejected him and put him to death. ver. 14, 15. (2.) That in order to do this, he sets before them clearly the *obligation* to obey him; and in doing this, appeals to the express command of Moses. He shows them that, according to Moses, whoever would not obey such a prophet should be cut off from among the people. In refusing, therefore, to hear this great prophet, and putting him to death, they had violated the express command of their own lawgiver. But it was possible *still* to obey him, for he still *lived* in heaven; and all the authority of *Moses*, therefore, made it a matter of obligation for them still to hear and obey him. The Jews were accustomed to apply the name *prophet* to the Messiah (John i. 21; vi. 14; vii. 40. Matt. xxi. 11. Luke iv. 24), and it has been shown from the writings of the Jewish Rabbins, that they believed the Messiah would be the greatest of the prophets, even greater than Moses. See Note, John i. 21. ¶ *The Lord your God.* In the Hebrew, "Jehovah, thy God." ¶ *Raise up unto you.* Appoint, or commission to come to you. ¶ *Of your brethren.* Among yourselves; of your own countrymen; so that you shall not be dependent on foreigners, or on teachers of other nations. All the prophets were native-born Jews. And it was particularly true of the Messiah that he was to be a Jew, descended from Abraham, and raised up from the midst of his brethren. Heb. ii. 11, 16, 17. On this account it was to be presumed that they would feel a deeper interest in him, and listen more attentively to his instructions. ¶ *Like unto me.* Not in all things, but only in the point which was under discussion. He was to resemble him in being able to make known to them the will of God, and thus preventing the necessity of looking to other teachers. The idea of *resemblance* between Moses and the prophet is not very strictly expressed in the Greek, except in the mere circumstance of being

23 And it shall come to pass, *that every soul which will not hear that Prophet shall be destroyed from among the people.*

raised up. God shall raise up to you a prophet *as he has raised up me—ὡς ἐγώ.* The resemblance between Moses and the Messiah should not be pressed too far. The Scriptures have not traced it farther than to the fact that *both* were raised up by God to communicate his will to the Jewish people; and therefore one should be heard as well as the other. ¶ *Him shall ye hear.* That is, him shall you obey, or you shall receive his instructions as a communication from God. ¶ *In all things whatsoever, &c.* These words are not quoted *literally* from the Hebrew, but they express the *sense* of what is said in Deut. xviii. 15. 18.

23. *And it shall come to pass.* It shall be, or shall occur. This is not the usual word rendered "it shall come to pass." It is a word commonly expressing *futurity*, but here it conveys the notion of *obligation*. In this verse Peter has not quoted the passage in Deuteronomy *literally*, but he has given the *sense*. ¶ *Every soul.* Every person, or individual. Soul is often put for the whole man by the Hebrews. Acts vii. 14. Josh. x. 28. ¶ *Hear that prophet.* That is, obey his instructions. He shall have *authority* to declare the will of God; and he that does not obey him refuses to obey God. Comp. Luke x. 16. John xiii. 20. ¶ *Shall be destroyed.* This quotation is made according to the *sense*, and not *literally*. In the Hebrew the expression is (Deut. xviii. 19), "I will require it of him," i. e. I will hold him *answerable*, or *responsible* for it; I will *punish* him. This expression the LXX. have rendered by "I will take vengeance on him." The idea of the passage is, therefore, that God would *punish* the man that would not hear the prophet, without specifying the particular way in which it should be done. The *usual mode* of punishing such offences was by *cutting the offender off from among the people*. Ex. xxx. 33; xii. 15; xix. 31. Num. xv. 31; xix. 13. Lev. vii. 20, 21. 25. 27, &c. The sense is, that he should be punished in the usual manner; i. e. by *excision*, or by being *destroyed* from among the people. The word translated *shall be destroyed* means properly to *exterminate*; wholly to devote to ruin, as of a wicked people, a wicked man whose life is taken, &c. To be destroyed *from among the people* means, however, to be excommunicated, or to be

24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

deprived of the *privileges* of a people. Among the Jews this was probably the most severe punishment that could be inflicted. It involved the idea of being cut off from the privileges of sacrifice and worship in the temple and in the synagogue, &c. and of being regarded as a *heathen* and an outcast. The idea which Peter expressed here was, that the Jews had exposed themselves to the severest punishment in rejecting and crucifying the Lord Jesus, and that they should, therefore, repent of this great sin, and seek for mercy. The same remark is applicable still to men. The Scriptures abundantly declare the truth, that if sinners will not hear the Lord Jesus, they shall be destroyed. And it becomes each individual to inquire with honesty whether he listens to *his* instructions, and obeys his law, or whether he is rejecting him and following the devices and desires of his own heart. It will be a solemn day when the sinner shall be called to *render a reason* why he has rejected the teachings and laws of the Son of God!

24. *All the prophets.* That is, the prophets in general. It may be said of the prophets *generally*, or of all of them, that they have foretold these things. This expression is not to be pressed as if we were to look for distinct predictions of the Messiah in *each one* of the prophets. The use of language does not require so strict an interpretation. ¶ *From Samuel.* In the previous verse (22) *Moses* was mentioned as the *first* in order. The next in order was *Samuel*. The same mention of *Moses* and *Samuel* occurs in Ps. xcix. 6. The reason why *Samuel* is mentioned here is, probably, that he was the first prophet after *Moses* who recorded a prediction respecting the times of the Messiah. The Jews, in their divisions of the books of the Old Testament, reckoned the book of Joshua as the first of the *prophets*. But in Joshua and Judges there does not occur any distinct prediction of the Messiah. The prophecy in *Samuel*, to which Peter probably had reference, is in 2 Sam. vii. 16. From the time of *Moses* to *Samuel*, also, it is probable that no prophet arose. God was consulted by *Urim* and *Thummim* (Ex. xxviii. 30. Num. xxvii. 31), and consequently no extraordinary messenger was sent to instruct the nation. ¶ *As many as have spoken.* Whosoever

25 Ye ^a are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And ^b in thy seed

^a Ro.9.4;15.8.

^b Ge.22.18.

has declared the will of God. This is to be taken in a *general* sense. The meaning is, that the prophets had *concurred* in foretelling these days. They not merely concurred in foretelling a happy future period, but they foretold *distinctly* the very things which had actually occurred respecting Jesus of Nazareth; and the Jews, therefore, should listen to the voice of their own prophets.

25. *Ye are the children of the prophets.* Greek, "Ye are the *sons* of the prophets." The meaning is, not that they were literally the *descendants* of the prophets, but that they were their *disciples, pupils, followers*. They professed to follow the prophets as their *teachers and guides*. Teachers, among the Jews, were often spoken of under the appellation of *fathers*, and disciples as *sons*. Matt. xii. 27. Note, Matt. i. 1. As they were the professed disciples of the prophets, they should listen to them. As they lived among the people to whom the prophets were sent, and to whom the promises were made, they should avail themselves of the offer of mercy, and embrace the Messiah. ¶ *And of the covenant.* Ye are the *sons* of the covenant; that is, you are of the posterity of Abraham, with whom the covenant was made. The word "sons" was often thus used to denote those to whom any favour appertained, whether by inheritance or in any other way. Thus Matt. viii. 12, "the children (sons) of the kingdom." John xvii. 12, "The son of perdition." The word *covenant* denotes properly a compact or agreement between equals, or those who have a right to make such a compact and to choose or refuse the terms. When applied to God and man, it denotes a *firm promise* on the part of God; a pledge to be regarded with all the sacredness of a compact, that he will do certain things on certain conditions. It is called a *covenant* only to designate its sacredness and the certainty of its fulfilment, not that *man* had any *right* to reject any of the terms or stipulations. As man has no such right, as he is bound to receive all that his Maker proposes, so, strictly and literally, there has been no *compact* or *covenant* between God and man. The *promise* to which Peter refers in the passage before us, is in Gen. xxii.

shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

26 Unto ^c you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him

^c Matt.10.5. Lu.24.47.

18; xii. 3. ¶ *In thy seed.* Thy posterity. See Rom. iv. 13. 16. This promise the apostle Paul affirms had express reference to the Messiah. Gal. iii. 16. The word *seed* is used sometimes to denote an individual (Gen. iv. 25); and the apostle (Gal. iii. 16) affirms that there was special reference to Christ in the promise made to Abraham. ¶ *All the kindreds.* The word translated *kindreds* (πατριαι) denotes those who have a common *father* or *ancestor*, and is applied to *families*. It is also referred to those larger communities which descended from the same ancestor, and thus refers to *nations*. Eph. iii. 15. Here it evidently refers to *all nations*. ¶ *Be blessed.* Be made happy.

26. *Unto you first.* To you who are Jews. This was the direction, that the gospel should be first preached to the Jews, beginning at Jerusalem. Luke xxiv. 47. Jesus himself also confined his ministry entirely to the Jews. ¶ *Having raised up.* This expression does not refer to his having raised him from the dead, but is used in the same sense as in verse 22, where God promised that he would *raise up* a prophet, and send him to teach the people. Peter means that God had *appointed* his Son Jesus, or had commissioned him to go and preach to the people to turn them away from their sins. ¶ *To bless you.* To make you happy; to fulfil the promise made to Abraham. ¶ *In turning away.* That is, by his preaching, example, death, &c. The highest blessing that can be conferred on men is to be turned from sin. It is the source of all woes, and if men are turned from that, they will be happy. Christ blesses no one *in* sin, or while *loving* sin, but by turning them *from* sin. This was the object which he had in view in coming. Isa. lix. 20. Matt. i. 21. The design of Peter in these remarks was to show them that the Messiah had come, and that now they might look for happiness, pardon, and mercy through him. As the Jews might, so may all; and as Jesus while living sought to turn away men from their sins, so he does still, and still designs to bless *all nations* by the gospel which he had himself preached, and to establish which, he died. All may therefore come and be blessed; and all may rejoice in the prospect that these

to bless you, in turning away ^a every one of you from his iniquities.

CHAPTER IV.

AND as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the ¹ cap-

^a Is. 59.20. Matt. 1.21. Tit. 2.11-14.

¹ or, ruler.

blessings shall yet be bestowed on all the kindreds of the earth. May the happy day soon come!

CHAPTER IV.

1. *The priests.* It is probable that these priests were a part of the sanhedrim, or great council of the nation. It is evident that they claimed some authority for preventing the preaching of the apostles. And the whole transaction seems to show that they did not come upon them in a tumultuous manner, but as keepers of the peace. ¶ *The captain of the temple.* See Notes, Matt. xxvi. 47. Luke xxii. 4. This was the commander of the guard stationed chiefly in the tower *Antonia*, especially during the great feasts; and it was their duty to preserve order, and prevent any tumult. The captain of the temple came at this time to prevent a tumult or suppress a riot, as it was supposed that the teaching of the apostles and the crowd collected by the healing of the lame man would lead to a tumult. ¶ *And the Sadducees.* See Note, Matt. iii. 7. One of the doctrines which the Sadducees maintained was, that there was no resurrection of the dead. Hence they were particularly opposed to the apostles for preaching it, and because they gave so clear proof that Jesus had risen, and were thus spreading the doctrine of the resurrection among the people. ¶ *Came upon them.* This expression implies that they came in a sudden and violent manner. See Luke xx. 1.

2. *Being grieved.* The word thus translated occurs but in one other place in the New Testament, Acts xvi. 18. It implies more than simple sorrow; it was a mingled emotion of indignation and anger. They did not grieve because they thought it a public calamity, but because it interfered with their authority, and opposed their doctrine. It means that it was painful to them, or they could not bear it. It is often the case that bigots, and men in authority, have this kind of grief at the zeal of men in spreading the truth, and thus undermining their influence and authority. ¶ *That they taught the people.* The ground of their grief was as much the fact that they should presume to instruct the people, as the matter which they taught them. They were offended

tain of the temple, and the Sadducees, ^b came upon them,

2 Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

^b Matt. 22.23. c.23.8.

that unlearned Galileans, in no way connected with the priestly office, and unauthorized by them, should presume to set themselves up as religious teachers. They claimed the right to watch over the interests of the people, and to declare who was authorized to instruct the nation. It has been no unusual thing for men in ecclesiastical stations to take exceptions to the ministry of those who have not been commissioned by themselves. Men easily fancy that all power to instruct others is lodged in their hands; and they oppose others simply from the fact that they have not derived their authority from them. The true question in this case was, whether these Galileans gave proof that they were sent by God. The fact of the miracle in this case should have been satisfactory. We have here, also, a striking instance of the fact that men may turn away from evidence, and from most important points, and fix on something that opposes their prejudices, and which may be a matter of very little moment. No inquiry was made whether the miracle had been really wrought; but the only inquiry was whether they had conformed to their views of doctrine and order. ¶ *And preached through Jesus, &c.* The Sadducees would be particularly opposed to this. They denied the doctrine of the resurrection, and they were troubled that the apostles adduced proof of it so strong as the resurrection of Jesus. It was perceived that this doctrine was becoming established among the people; multitudes believed that he had risen; and if he had been raised up, it followed also that others would rise. The Sadducees, therefore, felt that their cause was in danger; and they joined with the priests in endeavouring to arrest its spread among the people. This is the account of the first opposition that was made to the gospel as it was preached by the apostles. It is worthy of remark that it excited so much and so speedily the enmity of those in power; and that the apostles were so soon called to test the sincerity of their attachment to their Master. They who but a few days before had fled at the approach of danger, were called to meet this opposition, and to show their attachment to a risen Re-

3 And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in hold unto the next day: for it was now even-tide.

4 Howbeit many ^a of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

a c.28.24.

deemer; and they did it without shrinking: They showed *now* that they were indeed the true friends of the crucified Saviour: and this remarkable change in their conduct is one among the many proofs that they were influenced from above.

3. *Put them in hold.* That is, they took them into *custody*, or into safe keeping. Probably they committed them to the care of a guard. ¶ *Even-tide.* Evening. It was not convenient to assemble the council at night. This was moreover the time for the evening prayer or sacrifice, and it was not usual to assemble the sanhedrim at that hour.

4. *Howbeit.* But; notwithstanding. ¶ *Many of them, &c.* This was one of the instances which has since been so often repeated, in which *persecution* has only had a tendency to extend and establish the faith which it was designed to destroy. It finally came to be a proverb that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church;" and there is no lesson which men have been so slow to learn as that to *oppose* and *persecute* men is the very way to *confirm* them in their opinions, and to spread their doctrines. It was supposed here that the disciples were few, that they were without power, wealth, and influence, and that it was easy to crush them at once. But God made their persecution the means of extending, in a signal manner, the truths of the gospel and the triumphs of his word. And so in all ages it has been, and so it ever will be. ¶ *And the number, &c.* It seems probable that in this number of five thousand there were included the one hundred and twenty who are mentioned in ch. i. 15, and the three thousand who were converted on the day of Pentecost, ch. ii. 41. It does not appear probable that five thousand should have been assembled and converted in *Solomon's porch* (ch. iii. 11), on occasion of the cure of the lame man. Luke doubtless means to say that, up to this time, the number of persons who had joined themselves to the apostles was about five thousand. On this supposition, the work of religion must

5 And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers and elders, and scribes,

6 And Annas ^b the high-priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high-priest, were

b Jno.18.13.

have made a very rapid advance. How long this was after the day of Pentecost is not mentioned; but it is clear that it was at no very distant period; and the accession of near *two thousand* to the number of believers was a very striking proof of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. ¶ *Of the men.* Of the *persons*. The word *men* is often used without reference to sex. Luke xi. 31. Rom. iv. 8; xi. 4.

5, 6. *Their rulers.* The rulers of the Jews; doubtless the members of the *sanhedrim*, or *great council of the nation*. Comp. v. 15. Note, Matt. ii. 4; v. 22. The expression *their rulers*, looks as if this book was written for the Gentiles, or Luke would have said *our rulers*. ¶ *Elders.* Presbyters; or those who were *chosen* from among the people to sit in the sanhedrim. It is probable that the *rulers* were those who held also some other office, but were also authorized to sit in the great council. ¶ *Scribes.* See Note, Matt. ii. 4. ¶ *And Annas, &c.* Note, John xviii. 13. It is by no means certain that *Annas* was at *that time* the high-priest, but he *had been*, and doubtless retained the *title*. He was father-in-law to Caiaphas the high-priest; and from this fact, together with his former dignity, he is mentioned first. ¶ *Caiaphas.* Son-in-law of Annas, and now exercising the office of the high-priest. John xviii. 13. ¶ *John and Alexander, &c.* Of these persons nothing more is known. It is clear that they were members of the great council, and the mention of their names shows that the men of chief authority and influence were assembled to silence the apostles. Annas and Caiaphas had been concerned in the condemnation of Jesus, and they would now feel a special interest in arresting the progress of the gospel among the people. All the success of the gospel reflected back light upon the wickedness of the act of condemning the Lord Jesus. And this fact may serve, in part, to account for their strong desire to silence the apostles. ¶ *At Jerusalem, &c.* This was the usual place of assembling the sanhedrim. But the Jewish writers (see

gathered together at Jerusalem.

7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By ^a what power, or by what name, have ye done this ?

a Matt. 21. 23.

Lightfoot on this place) say that forty years before the destruction of the city, on account of the great increase of crime, &c. the sanhedrim was removed from place to place. The declaration of Luke that they were now assembled in *Jerusalem*, seems to imply that they sometimes met in other places. It is probable that the members of the sanhedrim were not in the city at the time mentioned in ver. 3, and this was the reason why the trial was deferred to the next day.

7. *In the midst.* In the presence of the great council. ¶ *By what power, &c.* A similar question was put to our Saviour in his trial. Matt. xxi. 23. ¶ *By what name.* That is, by whose authority. It is very probable that they expected to intimidate the apostles by this question. They claimed the right of regulating the religious affairs of the nation. They had vast power with the people. They assumed that all power to instruct the people should originate with them: and they expected that the apostles would be confounded, as having violated the established usage of the nation. It did not seem to occur to them to enter into an investigation of the question, whether this *acknowledged* miracle did not prove that they were sent by God; but they *assumed* that they were impostors, and attempted to silence them by authority. It has been usual with the enemies of religion to attempt to *intimidate* its friends, and when *argument* fails, to attempt to *silence* Christians by appealing to their fears.

8. *Filled with the Holy Ghost.* Note, ch. ii. 4. ¶ *Ye rulers, &c.* Peter addressed the sanhedrim with perfect respect. He did not call in question their authority to propose this question. He seemed to regard this as a favourable opportunity to declare the truth and state the evidence of the Christian religion. In this he acted on the principle of the injunction which he himself afterwards gave (1 Pet. iii. 15), "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." Innocence is willing to be questioned; and a believer in the truth will rejoice in *any* opportunity to state the evidence of what is believed. It is

8 Then Peter, filled ^b with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,

9 If we this day be examined of

b c. 7. 55.

remarkable, also, that this was before the great council of the nation; the body that was clothed with the highest authority. And Peter could not have forgotten that before this very council, and these very men, his Master had been arraigned and condemned. Nor could he have forgotten that in the very room where this same council was convened to try his Lord, *he had himself* shrunk from an honest avowal of attachment to him, and shamefully and profanely denied him. That he was now able to stand boldly before this same tribunal, evinced a remarkable *change* in his feelings, and was a most clear and impressive proof of the genuineness of his repentance when he went out and wept bitterly. Comp. Luke xxii. 54—62. And we may remark here, that one of the most clear evidences of the sincerity of repentance is when it leads to a result like this. So deeply was the heart of Peter affected by his sin (Luke xxii. 62), and so genuine was his sorrow, that he doubtless remembered his crime on this occasion; and the memory of it inspired him with boldness. It may be further remarked, that *one* evidence of the genuineness of repentance is a desire to *repair* the evil which is done by crime. Peter had done dishonour to his Master and his cause, in the presence of the great council of the nation. Nothing, on such an occasion, would be more likely to do injury to the cause, than for one of the disciples of the Saviour to deny him—one of his followers to be guilty of *profaneness* and *falsehood*. But here was an opportunity, in some degree, at least, to repair the evil. Before the same council and the same men, in the same city, and in the presence of the same people, it is not an unnatural supposition that Peter rejoiced that he might have opportunity to bear *his* testimony to the divine mission of the Saviour whom he had before denied. By using the customary language of respect applied to the great council, Peter also has shown us that it is proper to evince respect for office, and for those in power. Religion requires us to render this homage, and to treat men in office with deference. Matt. xxii. 21. Rom. xiii. 7. 1 Pet. ii. 13—17.

the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole;

10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that ^a by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God

^a c.3.6,16.

10. *Be it known, &c.* Peter might have evaded the question, or he might have resorted to many excuses and subterfuges (*Calvin*), if he had been desirous of avoiding this inquiry. But it was a noble opportunity for vindicating the honour of his Lord and master. It was a noble opportunity also for repairing the evil which he had done by his guilty denial of his Lord. Although, therefore, this frank and open avowal was attended with danger, and although it was in the presence of the great and the mighty, yet he chose to state fully and clearly his conviction of the truth. Never was there an instance of greater boldness; and never could there be a more striking illustration of the fitness of the name which the Lord Jesus gave him, that of a *rock*. John i. 42. Matt. xvi. 17, 18. The timid, trembling, yielding, and vacillating Simon, he who just before was terrified by a servant girl, and who on the lake was afraid of sinking, is now transformed into the manly, decided, and firm *Cephas*, fearless before the great council of the nation, and in an unwavering tone asserting the authority of him whom *he* had just before denied, and whom *they* had just before put to death. It is not possible to account for this change except on the supposition that this religion is true. Peter had no worldly motive to actuate him. He had no prospect of wealth or fame by this. Even the hopes of honour and preferment which they had cherished before the death of Jesus, and which *might* have been supposed to influence them then, were now abandoned by the apostles. Their Master had died; and all their hopes of human honour and power had been buried in his grave. Nothing but the conviction of the *truth* could have wrought this change, and transformed this timid disciple to a bold and uncompromising apostle. ¶ *By the name.* By the authority or power. ch. iii. 6. ¶ *Of Jesus Christ.* The union of these two names would be particularly offensive to the sanhedrim. They *denied* that Jesus was the Christ, or the Messiah; Peter, by the use of the word *Christ*, affirmed

raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole.

11 This is the stone ^b which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

^b Ps. 118. 22. Is. 28. 16. Matt. 21. 42.

that he was. In the language then used, it would be, "By the name of Jesus, *the Messiah*." ¶ *Of Nazareth.* Lest there should be any mistake about his meaning, he specified that he referred to the despised *Nazarene*; to him who had just been put death, as they supposed, covered with infamy. Christians little regard the epithets of opprobrium which may be affixed to themselves or to their religion. ¶ *Whom ye crucified.* There is emphasis in all the expressions that Peter uses. He had before charged the *people* with the crime of having put him to death. ch. ii. 23; iii. 14, 15. But he now had the opportunity, contrary to all expectation, of urging the charge with still greater force on the *rulers themselves*, on the very council which had condemned him and delivered him to Pilate. It was a remarkable providence that an opportunity was thus afforded of urging this charge in the presence of the sanhedrim, and of proclaiming *to them* the necessity of repentance. Little did *they* imagine when they condemned the Lord Jesus, that this charge would be so soon urged. This is one of the instances in which God takes the wise in their own craftiness. Job v. 13. *They* had arraigned the apostles; they demanded their authority for what they had done; and thus they had directly opened the way, and invited them to the serious and solemn charge which Peter here urges against them.

11. *This is the stone.* This passage is found in Ps. cxviii. 22. It is quoted, also, by our Saviour as applicable to himself. See Note on Matt. xxi. 42. The ancient Jews applied this to David. In the Targum on Ps. cxviii. 22, this passage is rendered, "The child who was among the sons of Jesse, and was worthy to be constituted King, the builders rejected." The New Testament writers, however, apply it without any doubt to the Messiah. Comp. Isa. xxviii. 16. Rom. ix. 33. Eph. ii. 20. And from this passage we may learn, that God will overrule the devices and plans of wicked men, to accomplish his own purposes. What men despise and set at nought, *he esteems* of

12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for ^a there is none other

^a c. 10.43. 1 Tim. 2.5,6.

inestimable value in his kingdom. What the great and the mighty condemn, he regards as the very foundation and cornerstone of the edifice which he designs to rear. Nothing has been more remarkable than this in the history of man; and in nothing is more contempt thrown on the proud projects of men, than that what *they* have rejected he has made the very basis of his schemes.

12. *Neither is there salvation.* The word *salvation* properly denotes any *preservation*, or keeping any thing in a *safe state*; a preserving it from harm. It signifies, also, deliverance from any evil of body or mind; from pain, sickness, danger, &c. Acts vii. 25. But it is in the New Testament applied particularly to the work which the Messiah came to do, "to seek and to *save* those which were lost." This work refers primarily to a deliverance of the soul *from sin*. Matt. i. 21. Acts v. 31. Luke iv. 18. Rom. viii. 21. Gal. v. 1. It then denotes, *as a consequence* of freedom from sin, freedom from all the ills to which sin exposes man, and the attainment of that perfect peace and joy which shall be bestowed on the children of God in the heavens. The reasons why Peter introduces this subject here seem to be these: (1.) He was discoursing of the *deliverance* of the man that was healed, his *salvation* from a long and painful calamity. This deliverance had been accomplished by the power of Jesus. The mention of this suggested that *greater* and more important *salvation* from sin and death which it was the object of the Lord Jesus to effect. As it was by *his* power that this man had been healed, so it was by *his* power only that men could be saved from death and hell. Deliverance from any temporal calamity should lead the thoughts to that higher redemption which the Lord Jesus contemplates in regard to the soul. (2.) This was a favourable opportunity to introduce the doctrines of the gospel to the notice of the great council of the nation. The occasion invited to it; the mention of a *part* of the work of Jesus invited to a contemplation of his *whole* work. Peter would not have done justice to the character and work of Christ, if he had not introduced that great design which he had in view to save men from death and hell. It is probable, also, that he advanced a sentiment in which he expected they would immediately con-

^b name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.

^b Ps. 45.17.

cur, and which accorded with their well-known opinions, that salvation was to be obtained only by the Messiah. Thus Paul (Acts xxvi. 22, 23) says that he taught nothing else than what was delivered by Moses and the prophets, &c. Comp. Acts xxiii. 6; xxvi. 6. The apostles did not *pretend* to proclaim any doctrine which was not delivered by Moses and the prophets, and which did not in fact constitute a part of the *creed* of the Jewish nation. ¶ *In any other.* Any other person. He does not mean to say that *God* is not able to save, but that the salvation of the human family is intrusted to the hands of Jesus the Messiah. ¶ *For there is none other name.* This is an explanation of what he had said in the previous part of the verse. The word *name* here is used to denote the person himself; there is no other *being*, or *person*. As we should say, there is *no one* who can save but Jesus Christ. The word *name* is often used in this sense. See Note on ver. 6. 16. That there is no *other* Saviour, or mediator between God and man, is abundantly taught in the New Testament; and it is indeed the main design of revelation to prove this. See 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6. Acts x. 43. ¶ *Under heaven.* This expression does not materially differ from the one immediately following, "among men." They are designed to express with emphasis the sentiment that salvation is to be obtained in *Christ alone*, and not in any patriarch, or prophet, or teacher, or king, or in any false Messiah. ¶ *Given.* In this word it is implied that *salvation* has its origin in God; that a Saviour for men must be *given* by him; and that salvation cannot be originated by any power among men. The Lord Jesus is thus uniformly represented as *given*, or *appointed* by God for this great purpose (John iii. 16; xvii. 4. 1 Cor. iii. 5. Gal. i. 4; ii. 20. Eph. i. 22; v. 25. 1 Tim. ii. 6. Rom. v. 15—18. 23); and hence Christ is called the "unspeakable gift" of God. 2 Cor. ix. 15. ¶ *Whereby we must be saved.* By which it is *fit*, or proper (*ῥητι*), that we should be saved. There is no other way of salvation that is *adapted* to the great object contemplated; and therefore, if saved, it must be in this way, and by this plan. All other schemes by men's own devices are *not adapted* to the purpose, and therefore cannot save. The doctrine that men can be saved *only* by Jesus Christ is abundantly taught in the

Scriptures. To show the failure of all other schemes of religion was the great design of the first part of the epistle to the Romans. By a laboured argument Paul there shows (ch. i.) that the *Gentiles* had failed in their attempt to justify themselves; and in ch. ii. iii. that the same thing was true also of the Jews. If *both* these schemes failed, then there was need of some *other* plan; and that plan was that of salvation by Jesus Christ. If it be asked, then, whether this affirmation of Peter is to be understood as having respect to *infants* and *the heathen*, we may remark, (1.) That his design was primarily to address the Jews, "Whereby *we* must be saved." But (2.) The same thing is doubtless true of others. If, as Christians generally believe, infants are saved, there is no absurdity in supposing that it is by the merits of the atonement. *But* for that, there would have been no promise of salvation. No offer *has* been made except by the Mediator; and to him doubtless is to be ascribed all the glory of raising up even those in infancy to eternal life. If any of the heathen are to be saved, as most Christians suppose, and as seems in accordance with the mercy of God, it is no less certain that it will be in consequence of the intervention of Christ. Those who will be brought to heaven will sing one song (Rev. v. 9), and will be prepared for eternal union in the service of God in the skies. Still, the Scriptures have *not* declared that *great numbers* of the heathen will be saved, who have not the gospel. The contrary is more than implied in the New Testament. Rom. ii. 12. Neither has the Scripture affirmed that *all* the heathen shall certainly be cut off. It has been discovered by missionaries among the heathen that individuals have, in a remarkable way, been convinced of the folly of idolatry, and were seeking a better religion; that their minds were in a serious, thoughtful, inquiring state, and that they *at once* embraced the gospel when it was offered to them, as *exactly* adapted to their state of mind, and meeting their inquiries. Such was extensively the case in the Sandwich Islands; and the following instance recently occurred in this country. "The Flat-head Indians, living west of the Rocky mountains, recently sent a deputation to the white settlements to inquire after the Bible. The circumstance that led to this singular movement is as follows: It appears that a white man (Mr. Catlin) had penetrated into their country, and happened to be a spectator at one of their religious ceremonies. He informed

them that their mode of worshipping the Supreme Being was radically wrong, and that the people away towards the rising of the sun had been put in possession of the true mode of worshipping the Great Spirit. On receiving this information, they called a national council to take this subject into consideration. Some said, if this be true, it is certainly high time we were put in possession of this mode. They accordingly deputed four of the chiefs to proceed to St. Louis, to see their great father, general Clark, to inquire of him the truth of this matter. They were cordially received by the general, who gave them a succinct history of Revelation, and the necessary instruction relative to their important mission. Two of them sunk under the severe toils attending a journey of three thousand miles. The remaining two, after acquiring what knowledge they could of the Bible, its institutions and precepts, returned, to carry back those few rays of divine light to their benighted countrymen." In *what way* their minds were led to this state we cannot say; or how this *preparation* for the gospel was connected with the *agency* and *merits* of Christ, we perhaps cannot understand. But we know that the affairs of *this entire world* are placed under the control of Christ (John xvii. 2. Eph. i. 21, 22), and that the arrangements of events by which they were brought to this state of mind are in his hands. Another remark may here be made: it is, that it often occurs that blessings come upon us *from benefactors whom we do not see, and from sources which we cannot trace*. On this principle we receive *many* of the mercies of life; and from any thing that appears, in this way many blessings of salvation may be conferred on the world, and possibly many of the heathen be saved. Still, this view does not interfere with the command of Christ to preach the gospel. Mark xvi. 15. *The great mass of the heathen* are not in this state: and this fact, so far as it goes, is an encouragement to preach the gospel to the entire world. If *Christ* thus prepares the way; if he extensively fits the minds of the heathen for the reception of the gospel; if he shows them the evil and folly of their own system, and leads them to desire a better, then this should operate not to produce indolence, but activity, and zeal, and encouragement to enter into the field white for the harvest, and to toil that *all* who seek the truth, and are *prepared* to embrace the gospel, may be brought to the light of the Sun of righteousness.

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned ^a

^a Matt. 11.25. 1 Cor. 1.27.

13. *Boldness.* This word properly denotes *openness or confidence in speaking*. It stands opposed to *hesitancy*, and to *equivocation* in declaring our sentiments. Here it means, that in spite of danger and opposition, they avowed their doctrines without any attempt to conceal or disguise them. ¶ *Peter and John.* It was they only who had been concerned in the healing of the lame man. ch. iii. 1. ¶ *And perceived.* When they knew that they were unlearned. This might have been ascertained either by report, or by the manner of their speaking. ¶ *Unlearned.* This word properly denotes those who were not acquainted with *letters*, or who had not had the benefit of an education. ¶ *Ignorant men.* Ἰδιώται. This word properly denotes those who live in private, in contradistinction from those who are engaged in *public* life, or in office. As this class of persons is commonly also supposed to be less learned, talented, and refined than those in office, it comes to denote those who are rude and illiterate. The idea intended to be conveyed here is, that these men had not had opportunities of education (comp. Matt. iv. 18—21), and had not been accustomed to public speaking, and hence they were surprised at their boldness. This same character is uniformly attributed to the early preachers of Christianity. Comp. 1 Cor. i. 27. Matt. xi. 25. The Galileans were regarded by the Jews as particularly rude and uncultivated. Matt. xxvi. 73. Mark xiv. 17. ¶ *They marvelled.* They wondered that men who had not been educated in the schools of the Rabbins, and accustomed to speak, should declare their sentiments with so much boldness. ¶ *And they took knowledge.* This expression means simply that *they knew*, or that they obtained evidence, or proof, that they had been with Jesus. It is not said in *what way* they obtained this evidence; but the connexion leads us to suppose it was by the *miracle* which they had wrought; by their firm and bold declaration of the doctrines of Jesus; and perhaps by the irresistible conviction that none *would* be thus bold who had not been personally with him, and who had not the firmest conviction that he was the Messiah. They had not been trained in their schools, and their boldness could not be attributed to the arts of rhetoric, but was the native, ingenuous,

and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

and manly exhibition of deep conviction of the truth of what they spoke; and that conviction could have been obtained only by their having been *with* him, and having been satisfied that he was the Messiah. Such conviction is of far more value in preaching than all the mere teachings of the schools; and *without* such a conviction, all preaching will be frigid, hypocritical, and useless. ¶ *Had been with Jesus.* Had been his followers, and had attended personally on his ministry. They gave evidence that they had *seen* him, been with him, heard him, and were convinced that he was the Messiah. We may learn here, (1.) That if men wish to be successful in preaching, it must be based on deep and thorough conviction of the truth of that which they deliver. (2.) They who preach should give evidence that they are acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ; that they have imbibed his spirit, pondered his instructions, studied the evidences of his divine mission, and are thoroughly convinced that he was from God. (3.) Boldness and success in the ministry, as well as in every thing else, will depend far more on honest, genuine, thorough conviction of the truth, than on all the endowments of talent and learning, and all the arts and skill of eloquence. No man should attempt to preach without such a thorough conviction of truth; and no man who has it will preach in vain. (4.) God often employs the ignorant and unlearned to confound the wise. 1 Cor. i. 27, 28. But it is not *by* their ignorance. It was not the ignorance of Peter and John that convinced the sanhedrim. It was done *in spite* of their ignorance. It was their *boldness*, and their honest conviction of truth. Besides, though not learned in the schools of the Jews, they had been under a far more important training, under the personal direction of Christ himself for three years; and now they were directly endowed by the Holy Ghost with the power of speaking with tongues. Though not taught in the schools, yet there was an important sense in which they were *not* unlearned and ignorant men. Their example should not, therefore, be pleaded in favour of an unlearned ministry. Christ himself expressed his opposition to an unlearned ministry, by *teaching them himself*, and then by bestowing on them miraculous endowments,

14 And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing ^a against it.

15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,

16 Saying, What ^b shall we do to these men? for that indeed a

a c. 19. 36.

b Jno. 11. 47.

which no learning at present can furnish. It may be remarked, further, that in the single selection which *he* made of an apostle after his ascension to heaven, when he came to choose one who had not been under his personal teaching, he chose a *learned man*, the apostle Paul, and thus evinced his purpose that there should be *training*, or *education* in those who are invested with the sacred office. (5.) Yet in the case before us, there is a striking proof of the truth and power of religion. These men had not acquired their boldness in the schools; they were not trained for argument among the Jews; they did not meet them by cunning sophistry; but they came with the honest conviction that what they were saying was true. Were they deceived? Were they not competent to bear witness? Had they any motive to attempt to palm a falsehood on men? Infidelity must answer *many* such questions as these before the apostles can be convicted of imposture.

14. *They could say nothing, &c.* The presence of the man that was healed was an unanswerable fact in proof of the truth of what the apostles alleged. The miracle was so public, clear, and decisive; the man that was healed was so well known, that there was no evasion or subterfuge by which they could escape the conclusion to which the apostles were conducting them. It evinced no little gratitude in the man that was healed that he was present on this occasion, and showed that he was deeply interested in what befell his benefactors. The miracles of Jesus and his apostles were such that they could not be denied; and hence the Jews did not *attempt* to deny that they wrought them. Comp. Matt. xii. 24. John xi. 45, 46. Acts xix. 36.

15—18. *What shall we do to these men?* The object which they had in view was evidently to prevent their preaching. The miracle was wrought; and was believed by the people to have been wrought. This they could not expect to

notable miracle hath been done by them *is* manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny *it*.

17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that ^c they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

18 And they called them, and

c c. 5. 40.

be able successfully to deny. Their only object, therefore, was to prevent the apostles from making the use which they saw they would, to convince the people that Jesus was the Messiah. The question therefore, was, in what way they should *prevent* this; whether by putting them to death, by imprisoning them, or by scourging them; or whether by simply exerting their *authority* and forbidding them. From the former they were deterred, doubtless by fear of the multitude. And they therefore adopted the latter, and seemed to suppose that the mere exertion of their authority would be sufficient to deter them from this in future.

¶ *The council.* Greek, *The sanhedrim*. This body was composed of seventy-one or seventy-two persons, and was intrusted with the principal affairs of the nation. It was a body of vast influence and power; and hence they supposed that their command might be sufficient to restrain ignorant Galileans from speaking. Before this same body, and probably the same men, our Saviour was arraigned; and by them condemned before he was delivered to the Roman governor. Matt. xxvi. 59, &c. And before this same body, and in the presence of the same men, Peter had just before denied his Lord. Matt. xxvi. 70, &c. The fact that the disciples had fled on a former occasion, and that Peter had denied his Saviour, may have operated to induce them to believe that they would be terrified by their threats, and deterred from preaching publicly in the name of Jesus. ¶ *A notable miracle.* A known, undeniable miracle. ¶ *That it spread.* That the *knowledge* of it may not spread among them any further. ¶ *Let us straitly threaten them.* Greek, *Let us threaten them with a threat.* This is a *Hebraism*, expressing *intensity*, *certainty*, &c. The *threat* was a *command* (ver. 18) not to teach, implying their displeasure if they did do it. This threat, however, was not effectual. On the next occasion, which occurred soon after (ch. v. 40), they added *beating* to their threats,

commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to ^ahearken

^a c.5.29.

in order to deter them from preaching in the name of Jesus.

19. *Whether it be right, &c.* The apostles abated nothing of their boldness when threatened. They openly appealed to their judges whether their command could be right. And in doing this, they expressed their full conviction of the truth of what they had said, and their deliberate purpose not to regard their command, but still to proclaim to the people the truth that Jesus was the Messiah, ¶ *In the sight of God.* That is, whether *God* will judge this to be right. The grand question was, how *God* would regard it. If *he* disapproved it, it was wrong. It was not merely a question pertaining to their reputation, safety, or life; but it was a question of conscience before God. And we have here a striking instance of the principle on which Christians act. It is, to lay their safety, reputation, and life out of view, and to bring every thing to this test, *WHETHER IT WILL PLEASE GOD.* If it will, it is right; if it will not, it is wrong. ¶ *To hearken.* To *hear* and to *hearken* are often used to denote to *obey*. John v. 24; viii. 47, &c. ¶ *Judge ye.* This was an appeal to them directly as judges, and as men. And it may be presumed that it was an appeal which they could not resist. The sanhedrim acknowledged itself to have been appointed by God; and to have no authority which was not derived from his appointment. Of course, God could modify, supersede, or repeal their authority; and the abstract principle, that it was better to obey God than man, they could not call in question. The only inquiry was, whether they had *evidence* that God had issued any command in the case. Of that, the apostles were satisfied; and that, the rulers could not deny. It may be remarked, that this is one of the first and most bold appeals on record, in favour of the right of private judgment and the liberty of conscience. That liberty was supposed in all the Jewish religion. It was admitted that the authority of God in all matters was superior to that of man. And the same spirit manifested itself thus early in the Christian church against all dominion over the

unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

20 For ^bwe cannot but speak the things which ^cwe have seen and heard.

^b Je.20.9.

^c c.22.15. 1Jno.1.1,3.

conscience, and in favour of the right to follow the dictates of the conscience and the will of God. As a mere historical fact, therefore, it is interesting to contemplate this; and still more interesting in its important bearings on human liberty and human happiness. The doctrine is still more explicitly stated in ch. v. 29. "We ought to obey God rather than man."

20. *For, &c.* This is given as a reason why they should obey God rather than man. They had had so clear evidence that God had sent the Messiah; and they had received so direct and solemn a command (Mark xvi. 16) to preach the gospel, that they could not be restrained. There was a necessity laid on them to preach the gospel. See 1 Cor. ix. 16, comp. Jer. xx. 9. Acts xviii. 5. Job xxxii. 18, 19. Ps. xxxix. 1—3.

It has already been remarked, that these two verses contain an important *principle* in favour of religious *liberty*—the liberty of conscience, and of private judgment. They contain the *great principle* of the Christian, and of the *Protestant* religion, that the responsibility of men for their religious opinions is direct to God, and that other men have no power of control. The opposite of this is tyranny and oppression. It may be proper, in addition, to present some further remarks, involved in the principle here stated. (1.) Religion, from the commencement, has been favourable to *liberty*. There was no principle more sacred among the Jews, than that they were to be independent of other nations. Perhaps no people have ever been so restive under a foreign yoke, so prone to rebel, and so difficult to be broken down by oppression and by arms, as were the Jews. So true was this, that it appeared to other nations to be mere obstinacy. They were often subdued, but they rose against their oppressors, and threw off the yoke. No people has been found who were so difficult to be reduced to slavery. It is well known that the Romans were accustomed to subject the captives taken in war to perpetual servitude; and *commonly* the spirit of the captive was broken, and he remained quietly in bondage. But not so

the Jew. Nothing ever tamed his spirit. No bribes, or threats, or chains could induce him to violate the laws of his religion. Even in captivity, we are told, that the Jewish slaves at Rome *would* observe the Sabbath, would keep the feasts of their nation, and never would conform to the customs of an idolatrous people. To the Romans this appeared to be mere obstinacy. But it was the genius of their religion. The right of liberty of thought was one which they would not surrender. The spirit of the patriarchs was favourable to liberty, and implied responsibility only to God. Familiarity with the sacred books had taught them these lessons; and neither time nor distance could obliterate them. In the time of Christ, the great mass of the nation were evidently *opposed* to the tax paid to the Roman nation, and sighed under this burden, until they rose and attempted to assert their rights; and their city, and temple, and land were sacrificed rather than *yield* this great principle. (2.) This same principle was evinced by the apostles and by the early Christians. With this doctrine fresh upon their hearts, they went forth to other lands. They maintained it at the expense of their blood; and thousands fell as martyrs in the cause of liberty and of private judgment in religion. No men ever more firmly defended liberty than the early martyrs; and each one that died, died in defence of a principle which is now the acknowledged right of all men. (3.) The designs of tyranny and superstition have been to destroy this principle. This was the aim of the sanhedrim; and yet, when Peter and John appealed to their *consciences*, they did not dare to avow their purpose. This has been the aim of all tyrants; and this the effect of all superstition. Hence the church of Rome has taken away the Scriptures from the people; and has thus furnished incontestable evidence that in its view the Bible is favourable to liberty. For centuries, tyranny reigned in one black night over Europe; nor was the darkness dispelled until the Bible, that taught men the principles of freedom, was restored to them. (4.) The effect of the principle avowed by the apostles has been uniform. Luther began the Reformation by finding in a monastery a copy of the Bible, when himself more than twenty years of age—a book which till that time he had never seen. The effect on the liberties of Europe was immediately seen. Hume admitted, that whatever liberty England possessed was to be traced to the Puritans. Our own land is a striking instance

of the effect of this great principle, and of its influence on the rights of man. And just in proportion as the New Testament is spread abroad, will men seek for freedom, and break the chains of oppression. The best way to promote universal liberty, is to spread the Bible to the ends of the earth. There is not a precept in it that is not favourable to freedom. It tends to enlarge and liberalize the mind; to teach men their rights; to put an end to *ignorance*, the universal stronghold of superstition and tyranny; and to diffuse the love of justice, truth, and order. It shows man that he is responsible to God, and that no one has a right to ordain any thing which contravenes the liberty of his fellow.

If it be asked here what the principle is, I answer, (1.) That men have a right to their private judgment in matters of religion, subject only to God. The *only* restraint which, it is now settled, can be imposed on this, is, that no man has a right, under pretence of conscience, to injure or molest his fellow-men, or to disturb the peace and harmony of society. (2.) No magistrate, church, council, or parent has a right to *impose* a creed on others, and to demand subscription to it by mere authority. (3.) No magistrate, church, or parent has a right to *control* the free exercise of private judgment in this case. The power of a *parent* is to teach, advise, and entreat. The duty of a child is to listen with respect, to examine with candour, to pray over the subject, and to be deliberate and calm, not rash, hasty, impetuous, and self-willed. But when the child is thus convinced that his duty to God requires a particular course, then here is a *higher* obligation than any earthly law, and he must obey God rather than man, even a father or a mother. Matt. x. 37, 38. (4.) Every man *is* responsible to God for his opinions and his conduct. Man may not control him, but God may and will. The great question before every man is, *What is right in the sight of God?* It is not what is expedient, or safe, or pleasurable, or honourable among men; but what is right in the sight of God. Neither in their opinions nor their conduct are men free from responsibility.—From this whole subject we see the duty of spreading the Bible. If we love liberty; if we hate tyranny and superstition; if we wish to extend the knowledge of the rights of man, and break every arm of oppression, let us spread far and wide the Book of God, and place in every palace and every cottage on the globe a copy of the sacred Scriptures.

21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because ^a of the people: for all *men* glorified God for that which was done.

22 For the man was above forty

^a Matt. 21. 26. c. 5. 26.

21. *Finding nothing, &c.* That is, not being able to devise any way of punishing them, without exciting a tumult among the people, and endangering their own authority. The sanhedrim was frequently influenced by this fear; and it shows that their own authority was much dependent on the caprice of the multitude. Comp. Matt. xxi. 26. ¶ *All men.* That is, the great mass or body of the people. ¶ *Glorified God.* Praised God for the miracle. This implies, (1.) That they believed that the miracle was genuine. (2.) That they were grateful to God for so signal a mercy in conferring health and comfort on a man who had been long afflicted. We may add further, that here is the highest evidence of the reality of the miracle. Even the sanhedrim, with all their prejudice and opposition, did not call it in question. And the common people, who had doubtless been acquainted with this man for years, were convinced that it was real. It would have been impossible to *impose* on keen-sighted and jealous adversaries in this manner, if this had been an imposture.

22. *For the man, &c.* The age of the man is mentioned to show the certainty and greatness of the miracle. If it had been a man who had been lame but a few years; or if it had been a child or a very young man; the case would not have been so remarkable. But after a continuance of forty years, all hope of healing him by any ordinary means must have been abandoned; and all pretence that this was jugglery or deception must have been absurd.

23. *Their own company.* They joined the other apostles and Christians. ch. ii. 44, 45. ¶ *And reported, &c.* It doubtless became a subject of interesting inquiry, what they should do in this case. They had been *threatened* by the highest authority of the nation, and *commanded* not to preach again in the name of Jesus. Whether they should obey them and be silent; or whether they should leave Jerusalem and preach elsewhere, could not but be an interesting subject of inquiry; and they very properly sought the counsel of

years old on whom this miracle of healing was shewed.

23 And being let go, they went ^b to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

24 And when they heard that,

^b c. 2. 44-46.

their brethren, and looked to God for direction; an example which all should follow who are exposed to persecution, or who are in any perplexity about the path of duty.

21. *They lift up their voice.* To lift up the voice, among the Hebrews, was a phrase denoting either an address to the people (Judg. ix. 7), or a phrase expressive of *weeping* (Gen. xxix. 11. Judg. ii. 4. Ruth i. 9. 1 Sam. xxiv. 16), or was expressive of *prayer*. To lift up the voice to God, means simply they *prayed* to him. ¶ *With one accord.* Unitedly. Properly with one *mind*, or purpose. See Note, ch. i. 14. The union of the early Christians is often noticed in the Acts of the Apostles. Thus far there was no jar or dissension in their society, and every thing has the appearance of the most entire affection and confidence. ¶ *Lord.* Greek, Δέσποτα. From this word is derived the word *despot*. This is not the usual word employed by which to address God. The word commonly translated *Lord* is Κύριος. The word here used denotes one who rules over others, and was applied to the highest magistrate or officer. It denotes authority; power; *absoluteness* in ruling. It is a word denoting more authority in *ruling* than the other. That more commonly denotes a *property* in a thing; this denotes absolute rule. It is applied to God, in Luke ii. 29. Rev. vi. 10. Jude 4; to Jesus Christ, 2 Pet. ii. 1; to masters, 1 Tim. vi. 1. Titus ii. 9. 1 Pet. ii. 18; to husbands, 1 Pet. iii. 6; and to a possessor, or owner, 2 Tim. ii. 21. ¶ *Thou art God.* This ascription of praise seems to have been designed to denote *their* sense of his *power* to deliver them; and his *right* to dispose of them. They were employed in his service; they were encompassed with dangers; and they acknowledged him as *their* God, who had made all things, and who had an entire right to direct, and to dispose of them for his own glory. In times of danger and perplexity we should remember that God has a right to do with us as he pleases; and we should go cheerfully and commit ourselves into his hands. ¶ *Which hast made, &c.* Gen. i.

they lift up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, ^a thou art God, which hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is ;

^a 2Ki.19.15.

This passage is taken directly from Ps. cxlvi. 6. Comp. Rev. xiv. 7.

25. *Who by the mouth, &c.* Ps. ii. 1, 2. This is a strong, solemn testimony to the inspiration of David. It is a declaration of the apostles made in solemn prayer, that God spake himself by the mouth of David. This is the *second* part of their prayer. In the first, they acknowledge the right of God to rule; in this, they appeal to a prophecy; they plead that this was a thing foretold; and as God had foreseen it and foretold it, they appealed to him to protect them. The times of tumult and opposition which had been foreseen, as about to attend the introduction of the gospel, had now come. They inferred, therefore, that Jesus was the Messiah; and as God had designed to establish his kingdom, they appealed to him to aid and protect them in this great work. This passage is taken from Ps. ii. 1, 2, and is an exact quotation from the Septuagint. This proves that the Psalm had reference to the Messiah. Thus it was manifestly understood by the Jews; and the authority of the apostles settles the question. The Psalm was composed by David; on what occasion is not known; nor is it material to our present purpose. It has been a matter of inquiry whether it referred to the Messiah *primarily*, or only in a *secondary* sense. Grotius supposes that it was composed by David when exposed to the hostility of the Assyrians, the Moabites, Philistines, Amalekites, &c.; and that in the midst of his dangers, he sought consolation in the purpose of God to establish him and his kingdom. But the more probable opinion is, that it referred *directly* and *solely* to the Messiah. ¶ *Why did the heathen.* The nations which were not Jews. This refers, doubtless, to the opposition which would be made to the spread of Christianity; and not *merely* to the opposition made to the Messiah himself, and to the act of putting him to death. ¶ *Rage.* This word refers to the excitement and tumult of a *multitude*; not a settled *plan*, but rather the heated and disorderly conduct of a *mob*. It means that the progress of the gospel would encounter tumultuous opposition; and that the excited nations would rush violently to put it down and

25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why ^b did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

26 The kings of the earth stood

^b Ps.2.1,2.

destroy it. ¶ *And the people.* The expression "the people" does not refer to a class of men different essentially from the heathen. The "heathen," Heb. and Greek, "*the nations*," refer to men as organized into communities; the expression *the people* is used to denote the same persons without respect to their being so organized. The Hebrews were in the habit, in their poetry, of expressing the same idea essentially in parallel members of a sentence; or the last member of a sentence or verse expressed the same idea, with some slight variation, as the former. (See Lowth on the sacred poetry of the Hebrews.) ¶ *Imagine.* The word *imagine* does not express quite the force of the original. The Hebrew and the Greek both convey the idea of *meditating, thinking, purposing*. It means that they employed *thought, plan, purpose*, in opposing the Messiah. ¶ *Vain things.* The word here used (κενὰ) is a literal translation of the Hebrew (ריק), and means usually *empty*, as a vessel which is not filled; then *useless*, or that which amounts to nothing, &c. Here it means that they devised a plan which *turned out* to be vain, or ineffectual. They attempted an opposition to the Messiah which could not succeed. God would establish his kingdom in spite of their plans to oppose it. Their efforts were vain, because they were not strong enough to oppose God; because he had purposed to establish the kingdom of his Son; and he could overrule even their opposition to advance his cause.

26. *The kings of the earth.* The Psalmist specifies more particularly that *kings* and *rulers* would be opposed to the Messiah. This had occurred already by the opposition made to the Messiah by the rulers of the Jewish people; and it would be still more evinced by princes and kings, as the gospel should spread among the nations. ¶ *Stood up.* The word here used (παρίστημι) commonly means to present one's self, or to stand forth, for the purpose of aiding, counselling, &c. But here it means that they *rose*, or *presented themselves*, to evince their opposition. They stood opposed to the Messiah, and offered resistance to him. ¶ *The rulers.* This is another instance of the Hebrew

up, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord, and against his Christ.

27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod ^a and Pontius

a Lu. 23. 1-8, &c.

parallelism. The word does not denote another class of men from kings, but expresses the same idea in another form, or in a more general manner, meaning that all classes of persons in authority would be opposed to the gospel. ¶ *Were gathered together.* Hebrew, *consulted together*; were united in a consultation. The Greek implies that they were assembled for the purpose of consultation. ¶ *Against the Lord.* In the Hebrew, "against *Jehovah*." This is the peculiar name which is given in the Scriptures to God. They rose against his plan of appointing a Messiah, and against the Messiah whom he had chosen. ¶ *Against his Christ.* Hebrew, against his *Messiah*, or his Anointed. Note, Matt. i. 1. This is one of the places where the word *Messiah* is used in the Old Testament. The word occurs in about forty places, and is commonly translated *his anointed*, and is applied to kings. The direct reference of the word to the Messiah in the Old Testament is not frequent. This passage implies that opposition to the *Messiah* is opposition to *Jehovah*. And this is uniformly supposed in the sacred Scriptures. He that is opposed to Christ is opposed to God. He that neglects him neglects God. He that despises him despises God. Matt. x. 40; xviii. 5. John xii. 44, 45. Luke x. 16. "He that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." The reasons of this are, (1.) That the Messiah is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his subsistence." Heb. i. 3. (2.) He is equal with the Father, possessing the same attributes, and the same power. John i. 1. Phil. ii. 6, &c. To despise him, therefore, is to despise God. (3.) He is appointed by God to this great work of saving men. To despise him, or to oppose him, is to despise and oppose him who appointed him to this work, to condemn his counsels, and to set him at nought. (4.) His work is dear to God. It has engaged his thoughts. It has been approved by him. His mission has been confirmed by the miraculous power of the Father, and by every possible manifestation of his approbation and love. To oppose the Messiah, is, therefore, to oppose

H

Pilate with the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together,

28 For ^b to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined ^c before to be done.

b c. 3. 18.

c Pr. 21. 30. Is. 46. 10; 53. 10.

that which is dear to the heart of God, and which has long been the object of his tender solicitude. It follows from this, that they who neglect the Christian religion are exposing themselves to the sore displeasure of God, and endangering their everlasting interests. No man is safe who opposes God; and no man can have evidence that God will approve him, who does not embrace the Messiah whom He has appointed to redeem the world.

27. *For of a truth.* Truly; really. ¶ *Thy holy child Jesus.* The word *child* is commonly applied to *infants*, or to sons and daughters in very early life. The word which is used here (παῖς) is different from that which is commonly applied to the Lord Jesus (υἱός). The latter expresses sonship without respect to age. The word which is here used also sometimes expresses sonship without any regard to age; and the word *son* would have been a more happy translation. Thus the same word is translated in Acts iii. 13. 26. In Acts xx. 12, it is translated "young man." ¶ *Both Herod, &c.* Luke xxiii. 1-12. ¶ *With the Gentiles.* The Romans, to whom he was delivered to be crucified. ¶ *The people of Israel.* The Jews, who were excited to this by the rulers. Matt. xxvii. 20.

28. *For to do, &c.* See Notes, ch. ii. 23; iii. 18. The facts which are brought to view in these verses are among the most remarkable on record. They are briefly these: (1.) That the Jewish rulers were opposed to the Messiah, and slew him. (2.) That the very people to whom he came, and for whose benefit he laboured, joined in the opposition, so that it became the act of a united people. (3.) That the Romans who were there, as a sort of representation of all pagan nations, were easily prevailed on to join in the persecution, and to become the executioners. (4.) That thus opposite factions, and dissimilar and prejudiced people, became united in opposing the Messiah. (5.) That the rulers of the Roman people, the emperors, and statesmen, and philosophers, and the rulers of other nations, united to oppose the gospel, and

brought all the power of persecution to stay its progress. (6.) That the *people* of the empire, the *mass* of men, were easily prevailed upon to join in the persecution, and endeavour to arrest its progress. And (7.) That the gospel has encountered similar difficulties and opposition wherever it has been faithfully presented to the attention of men. It has become a very serious question *why* this has been; or on what pretence this opposition has been vindicated; or how it can be accounted for. A question which it is of as much importance for the infidel as for the Christian to settle. We know that accusations of the corrupt lives of the early Christians were freely circulated, and the most gross accounts given of their scandalous conduct were propagated by those who chose to persecute them. (See Lardner's Credibility.) But such accounts are not now believed; and it is not certain that they were *ever* seriously believed by the rulers of the pagan people. It is certain that it was not on *this* account that the first opposition arose to Christ and his religion.

It is not proper here to enter into an examination of the causes of this opposition. We may state the outlines, however, in few words. (1.) The Jewish rulers were mortified, humbled, and moved with envy, that one so poor and despised should claim to be the Messiah. They had expected a different monarch; and all their prejudices rose at once against *his* claims to this high office. Matt. xxvii. 18. Mark xv. 10. (2.) The common people, disposed extensively to acknowledge his claims, were urged on by the enraged and vindictive priests to demand his death. Matt. xxvii. 20. (3.) Pilate was pressed on against his will by the impetuous and enraged multitude to deliver one whom he regarded as innocent. (4.) The Christian religion in its advances struck at once at the whole fabric of superstition in the Roman empire, and throughout the world. It did not, like other religions, ask a place amidst the religions already existing. It was *exclusive* in its claims. It denounced *all* other systems as idolatry or superstition, and sought to overthrow them. Those religions were interwoven with all the habits of the people; they were connected with all the departments of the state; they gave occupation to a vast number of priests and other officers, who obtained their livelihood by the existing superstitions, and who brought, of course, all the supposed sacredness of their character to support them. A religion which

attempted to overthrow the whole fabric, therefore, at once excited all their malice. The monarchs, whose thrones were based on the existing state of things; and the people, who venerated the religion of their ancestors, would be opposed to the new system. (5.) Christianity was despised. It was regarded as one form of the superstition of the Jews. And there was no people who were regarded with so much contempt by all other nations as the Jews. The writings of the Romans, on this point, are full proof. (6.) The new religion was opposed to all the *crimes* of the world. It began its career in a time of eminent wickedness. It plunged at once into the midst of this wickedness; sought the great cities where crimes and pollutions were condensed; and boldly reproved every form of prevailing impiety. At Athens, at Corinth, at Ephesus, at Rome itself, it denounced the judgment of God against every form of guilt. Whatever may be charged on the apostles, it will *not* be alleged that they were *timid* in denouncing the sins of the world. From all these causes it is not wonderful that the early Christians were persecuted. If it be asked, (7.) Why the same religion meets with opposition now in lands that are nominally Christian, it may be remarked, (a) that the human heart is the same that it always was, opposed to truth and righteousness; (b) that religion encounters still a host of sins that are opposed to it—pride, envy, malice, passion, the love of the world, and shame of acknowledging God; (c) that there has always been a peculiar opposition in the human heart to receiving salvation as the gift of God through a crucified Redeemer; and (d) that all the forms of vice, and lust, and profaneness that exist in the world, are opposed, and ever will be, to a religion of purity, and self-denial, and love.

On the whole, we may remark here, (1.) That the fact that Christianity has been thus opposed, and has triumphed, is no small proof of its divine origin. It has been *fairly tried*, and still survives and flourishes. It was well to put it to the *test*, and to bring to bear on it every thing which had a tendency to crush it, and thus to furnish the highest proof that it is from God. (2.) This religion cannot be destroyed; it will triumph; opposition to it is vain; it will make its way throughout the world; and the path of safety is *not* to oppose that which God is intending to establish in the earth. Sinners who stand opposed to the gospel, should tremble and be afraid; for sooner or later they *must* fall before its triumphant advances. It is

29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all ^a boldness they may speak thy word,

30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal: and that signs ^b and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

a ver. 13, 31. c. 14. 3; 28. 31. Ep. 6. 19. b c. 2. 43; 5. 12.

not safe to oppose that which has already been opposed by kings and rulers in every form, and yet has triumphed. It is not wise to risk one's eternal welfare on the question of successful opposition to that which God has, in so many ages and ways, pledged himself to protect; and when God has solemnly declared that the Son, the Messiah, whom he would set on his holy hill of Zion, should "break" his enemies "with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Ps. ii. 9.

29. *Behold their threatenings.* So look upon them as to grant us deliverance. They did not purpose to abandon their undertaking; they resolved to persevere; and they expected that this purpose would involve them in danger. With this purpose they implored the protection of God; they asked that he would not suffer them to be deterred from speaking boldly; and they sought that constant additional proof might be granted of the presence and power of God to confirm the truth of their message. ¶ *And grant, &c.* This is an instance of heroic boldness, and a determination to persevere in doing their duty to God. When we are assailed by those in power, when we are persecuted and in danger, we should commit our way unto God, and seek his aid, that we may not be deterred from the path of duty.

30. *By stretching forth thine hand, &c.* The apostles not only desired *boldness* to speak, but they asked that God would continue to work miracles, and thus furnish to them, and to the people, evidence of the truth of what they delivered. They did not even ask that he would preserve their lives, or keep them from danger. They were intent on their work, and they confidently committed their way to God, making it their great object to promote the knowledge of the truth, and seeking that God would glorify himself by establishing his kingdom among men. ¶ *Signs and wonders.* Miracles. Notes, ch. ii. 43.

31 And when they had prayed, ^{*} the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they ^d spake the word of God with boldness.

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one ^e heart

c c. 2. 2, 4; 16. 26. d ver. 29. e Ro. 15. 5, 6. 2 Cor. 13. 11. Phil. 2. 2. 1 Pct. 3. 8.

31. *And when they had prayed.* The event which followed was regarded by them as an evidence that God heard their prayer. ¶ *The place was shaken.* The word which is translated "was shaken," commonly denotes violent agitation, as the raging of the sea, the convulsion of an earthquake, or trees shaken by the wind. Matt. xi. 7. Acts xvi. 26. Heb. xii. 26. The language here is fitted to express the idea of an earthquake. Whether the motion was confined to the house where they were, is not said. They probably regarded this as an answer to their prayer, or as an evidence that God would be with them, (1.) Because it was sudden and violent, and was not produced by any natural causes; (2.) Because it occurred *immediately*, while they were seeking divine direction; (3.) Because it was an exhibition of great power, and was an evidence that God could protect them; and (4.) Because a convulsion so great, sudden, and mighty, was fitted at that time to awe them with a proof of the presence and power of God. A similar instance of an answer to prayer by an earthquake is recorded in Acts xvi. 25, 26. Comp. ch. ii. 1, 2. It may be added, that among the Jews an *earthquake* was very properly regarded as a striking and impressive proof of the presence of Jehovah. Isa. xxix. 6. Ps. lxxviii. 8. "The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God; even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel." See also the sublime description in Habakkuk iii. particularly ver. 6—11. Comp. Matt. xxvii. 54. Among the heathen, an earthquake was regarded as proof of the presence and *favour* of the Deity. (See Virgil, *Æniad* iii. 89.) ¶ *They were all filled, &c.* Notes, ch. ii. 4. Their being filled with the Holy Ghost here rather denotes their being inspired with *confidence* or *boldness*, than being endowed with new powers, as in Acts ii. 4.

32. *And the multitude.* The number of believers at this time had become large. In ch. iv. 4, it is said that it was

and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but ^a they had all things common.

33 And with great power ^b gave

a c.2.14.

b c.1.8.

five thousand; and the number was constantly increasing. ¶ *One heart.* This expression denotes tender union. They *felt* alike, or were attached to the same things, and this preserved them from jars and dissensions. ¶ *One soul.* This phrase also denotes close and tender union. No expression could denote it more strikingly than to say of friends they have *one soul*. Plutarch cites an ancient verse in his life of Cato of Utica, with this very expression—"Two friends, one soul." (*Grotius.*) Thus Diogenes Laertius also (5. i. 11.) says respecting Aristotle, that "being asked what was a friend; answered, that it was *one soul* dwelling in two bodies." (*Kuinöel.*) The Hebrews spake of two friends as being "one man." There can be no more striking demonstration of *union* and *love* than to say of more than five thousand suddenly drawn together, that they had one soul! And this union they evinced in every way possible; in their conduct, in their prayers, and in their property. How different would have been the aspect of the church, if the union had continued to the present time. ¶ *Neither said, &c.* That is, they did not regard it as their own, but to be used for the benefit of the whole society. See Notes, ch. ii. 44.

33. *And with great power.* See ch. i. 8. The word *power* here denotes *efficacy*, and means that they had *ability* given them to bear witness of the resurrection of the Saviour. It refers therefore rather to their *preaching*, than to their *miracles*. ¶ *Gave the apostles witness.* The apostles bore testimony to, ¶ *the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.* This was the main point to be established. If it was proved that the Lord Jesus *came to life again* after having been put to death, it established all that he taught, and was a demonstration that he was sent from God. They exerted, therefore, all their powers to prove this; and their success was such as might have been expected. Multitudes were converted to the Christian faith. ¶ *And great grace, &c.* The word *grace* means *favour*. Note, John i. 16. And the expression here may mean either that the favour of God was remarkably shown to them; or that they had great favour in the sight of the people. It does not refer, as the expression now

the apostles witness ^c of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace ^d was upon them all.

34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as

c Lu.1.48,49. c.1.22.

d Jno.1.16.

does commonly, to the internal blessings of religion on a man's own soul; to their personal advancement in the Christian *graces* of humility, &c.; but to the *favour* or success that attended their preaching. The meaning probably is, that the *favour* of the *people* towards them was great; or that great success attended their ministry among them. Thus the same word *grace* (Greek) is used in ch. ii. 47. If this is its meaning, then here is an instance of the power of the testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus to impress the minds of men. But this is not all, nor probably is it the main idea. It is that their union, their benevolence, their liberality in supplying the wants of the needy, was a means of opening the hearts of the people, and of winning them to the Saviour. If we wish to incline others to our opinions, or to bring them to be Christians, nothing is better adapted to it, than to show them kindness, and even to minister to their temporal wants. Benevolence towards them softens the heart, and inclines them to listen to us. It disarms their prejudices, and disposes them to the exercise of the mild and amiable feelings of religion. Hence our Saviour was engaged in healing the diseases, and supplying the wants of the people. He drew around him the poor, the needy, and the diseased, and supplied their necessities, and *thus* prepared them to receive his message of truth. Thus God is love, and is constantly doing good, that his *goodness* may lead men to repentance. Rom. ii. 4. And hence no persons have better opportunities to spread the true sentiments of religion, or are clothed with higher responsibilities, than those who have it in their *power* to do good; or than those who are habitually engaged in bestowing favours. Thus physicians have access to the hearts of men which other persons have not. Thus *parents* have an easy access to the minds of children, for they are constantly doing them good. And thus Sunday-school teachers, whose whole work is a work of benevolence, have direct and most efficient access to the hearts of the children committed to their care.

34. *That lacked.* That was in want; or whose wants were not supplied by the others. ¶ *As many as, &c.* The word

were possessors of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

35 And ^a laid *them* down at the apostles' feet; and ^b distribution

a ver. 37. c. 5.2.

b c. 2.45; 6.1.

used here is employed in a large, indefinite sense; but it would be improper to press it so as to suppose, that every individual that became a Christian sold at once all his property. The sense doubtless is, that this was done *when it was necessary*; they parted with whatever property was needful to supply the wants of their poor brethren. That it was by no means considered a matter of *obligation*, or enjoined by the apostles, is apparent from the case of Ananias. ch. v. 4. The fact that *Joses* is particularly mentioned (ver. 36), shows that it was by no means a universal practice thus to part with all their possessions. He was *one* instance in which it was done. Perhaps there were many other similar instances; but all that the passage requires us to believe is, that they parted with whatever was *needful* to supply the wants of the poor. This was an eminent and instructive instance of Christian liberality, and of the power of the gospel in overcoming one of the strongest passions that ever exist in the human bosom—the love of money. Many of the early Christians were poor. They were collected from the lower orders of the people. But *all* were not so. Some of them, it seems, were men of affluence. The effect of religion was to bring them all, in regard to feeling at least, on a level. They felt that they were members of one family; belonging to the same Redeemer; and they therefore imparted their property cheerfully to their brethren. Besides this, they were about to go to other lands to preach the gospel. They were to leave their native country; and they cheerfully parted with their lands, that they might go and proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ. See Notes, ch. ii. 44.

35. And laid *them* down, &c. That is, they committed the money received for their property to the disposal of the apostles, to distribute it as was necessary among the poor. This soon became a burdensome and inconvenient office, and they therefore appointed men who had especial charge of it. ch. vi. 1, 2, &c.

36. And *Joses*. Many manuscripts instead of *Joses* here read *Joseph*. The reasons why this individual is selected and specified particularly, were, doubt-

less, because he was a foreigner; because it was a remarkable instance of liberality; and because he subsequently distinguished himself in the work of the ministry.

36 And *Joses*, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of

less, because he was a foreigner; because it was a remarkable instance of liberality; and because he subsequently distinguished himself in the work of the ministry. He gave himself, his property, his all, to the service of the Lord Jesus, and went forth to the self-denying labours of the gospel. He is elsewhere mentioned with honour in the New Testament (Acts xi. 24. 30); and usually as the companion of the apostle Paul. The occasion on which he became connected with Paul in the ministry was, when he himself was sent forth by the church at Jerusalem to Antioch. There, it seems, he heard of the fame of Paul, and went to Tarsus to seek him, and brought him with him to Antioch. Acts xi. 22—26. Before this, he had been acquainted with him, and had introduced him to the other apostles at a time when they were afraid of Paul, and unwilling to acknowledge him as an apostle. Acts ix. 26, 27. At Antioch, Barnabas was led into dissimulation by Peter in regard to the Gentiles, and was reproved by his friend and companion, Paul. Gal. ii. 13. He and Paul continued to travel in fellowship until a dispute arose at Antioch about Mark, and they separated, Paul going with Silas through Syria and Cilicia, and Barnabas with Mark sailing for his native place, Cyprus. Acts xv. 35—41. See the following places for particulars of his history: Acts xi. 22. 25. 30; xii. 25; xiii. 1, 2. 50; xiv. 12; xv. 12. 1 Cor. ix. 6. Gal. ii. 1. 9. ¶ *Who by the apostles was surnamed, &c.* This name was doubtless given by the apostles. The practice of giving surnames, as expressive of character, was not uncommon. Thus Simon was called Peter, or Cephas, John i. 44; and thus James and John were surnamed Boanerges, Mark iii. 17. ¶ *Barnabas, which is, &c.* This word properly denotes the son of prophecy. It is compounded of two Syriac words, the one meaning son, and the other prophecy. The Greek word which is used to interpret this (παρηγγελισις), translated consolation, means properly also, exhortation, entreaty, petition, or advocacy. It also means consolation, or solace; and from this meaning the interpretation has been given to the word *Barnabas*, but with evident impropriety. It does not appear

consolation,) a Levite, *and* of the country of Cyprus,

37 Having land, sold *it*, and brought the money, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

CHAPTER V.

BUT a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,

2 And kept back *part* of the price,

CHAPTER V.

that the name was bestowed on account of this, though it is probable that he possessed it in an eminent degree, but on account of his talent for *speaking*, or *exhorting* the people to holiness, and his success in preaching. Comp. Acts xi. 23. ¶ *A Levite.* One of the descendants of Levi employed in the lower services of the temple. The whole tribe of *Levi* was set apart to the service of religion. It was divided into Priests and Levites. The three sons of Levi were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. Of the family of *Kohath* Aaron was descended, who was the first high-priest. His eldest son succeeded him, and the remainder of his sons were *priests*. All the others of the tribe of Levi were called *Levites*, and were employed in the work of the temple, in assisting the priests in performing sacred music, &c. Num. iii. Deut. xii. 18, 19; xviii. 6—8. 1 Chron. xxiii. 24. ¶ *Of the country of Cyprus.* Cyprus is the largest island in the Mediterranean; an island extremely fertile, abounding in wine, honey, oil, wool, &c. It is mentioned in Acts xiii. 4; xv. 39. The island is near to Cilicia, and is not far from the Jewish coast. It is mentioned by Dion Cassius (lib. 68, 69) that the Jews were very numerous in that island. (*Clark.*)

Barnabas afterwards became, with Paul, a distinguished preacher to the Gentiles. It is worthy of remark, that *both* were born in heathen countries, though by descent Jews; and as they were trained in heathen lands, they were better fitted for their peculiar work. The case of Barnabas is that of a man who had property, who entered the ministry, and gave up all for the Lord Jesus. The great mass of ministers, like very many who have been distinguished in other professions, have been taken from the poor, and from humble ranks in life. But all have not been. Many have been wealthy, and have devoted all to Christ; and in regard to others, it is to be remarked, that a very considerable proportion of them could have gained more *wealth* in some other profession than they do in the ministry. The ministry is a work of self-denial; and none should enter it who are not prepared to devote all to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. *But a certain man.* In the previous chapter, the historian had given an account of the eminent liberality and sincerity of the mass of early Christians, in being willing to give up their property to provide for the poor, and had mentioned the case of Barnabas as worthy of special attention. In this chapter he proceeds to mention a case, quite as striking, of insincerity and hypocrisy, and of the just judgment of God on those who were guilty of it. The case is a remarkable instance of the nature of *hypocrisy*, and goes to illustrate the art and cunning of the enemy of souls in attempting to corrupt the church, and to pervert the religion of the gospel. Hypocrisy consists in an attempt to *imitate* the people of God, or to assume the *appearance* of religion, in whatever form it may be manifested. In this case religion had been manifested by great self-denial and benevolence. The hypocrisy of Ananias consisted in *attempting* to imitate this appearance, and to impose in this way on the early Christians and on God. ¶ *With Sapphira his wife.* With her concurrence, or consent. It was a matter of *agreement* between them. ver. 2. 9. ¶ *Sold a possession.* The word here used (πρῶτον) does not indicate whether this was *land* or some other property. In ver. 3, however, we learn that it was *land* that was sold; and the word here translated *possession* is translated, in the Syriac, Arabic, and the Latin Vulgate, *land*. The *pretence* for which this was sold was doubtless to have the appearance of religion. That it was *sold* could be easily known by the Christian society, but it might not be so easily known for *how much* it was sold. Hence the attempt to impose on the apostles. It is clear that they were not under obligation to sell their property. But *having* sold it for the purposes of religion, it became their duty, if they professed to devote the avails of it to God, to do it entirely, and without any reservation.

2. *And kept back.* The word here used means properly to *separate*, to *part*; and then it means to *separate surreptitiously* or *clandestinely* for our own use a part of public property, as taxes, &c. It is used but three times in the New Testament,

his wife also being privy to it, and brought ^a a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

a c.4.34,37.

ver. 3, and in Titus ii. 10, where it is rendered *purlaining*. Here it means that they *secretly* kept back a part, while *professedly* devoting all to God. ¶ *His wife being privy to it.* His wife *knowing it*, and evidently concurring in it. ¶ *And laid it at the apostles' feet.* This was evidently an act *professedly* of devoting all to God. Comp. ch. iv. 37, also ver. 8, 9. That this was his *profession*, or *pretence*, is further implied in the fact that Peter charges him with having *lied* unto God. ver. 3, 4.

3. *But Peter said, &c.* Peter could have known this only by *revelation*. It was the manifest design of Ananias to deceive; nor was there any way of detecting him but by its being revealed to him by the Spirit of God. As it was an instance of enormous wickedness, and as it was very important to detect and punish the crime, it was made known to Peter directly by God. ¶ *Why hath Satan.* Great deeds of wickedness in the Scripture are traced to the influence and temptation of Satan. Comp. Luke xxii. 3. John xiii. 27. Especially is Satan called the *father of lies*. John viii. 44. 55. Comp. Gen. iii. 1—5. As this was an act of *falsehood*, or an attempt to deceive, it is with great propriety traced to the influence of Satan. The sin of Ananias consisted in his *yielding* to the temptation. Nowhere in the Bible are men supposed to be free from guilt, from the fact that they have been *tempted* to commit it. God requires them to *resist* temptation; and if they *yield* to it, they must be punished. ¶ *Filled thine heart.* A man's *heart* or *mind* is full of a thing when he is *intent* on it; when he is strongly *impelled* to it; or when he is fully occupied with it. The expression here means that he was *strongly impelled* or *excited* by Satan to this crime. ¶ *To lie to.* To attempt to deceive. The deception which he meant to practise was to keep back a *part* of the price, while he *pretended* to bring the whole of it; thus *tempting* God, and supposing that he could not detect the fraud. ¶ *The Holy Ghost.* τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον. The main inquiry here is, whether the apostle Peter intended to designate in this place the *third person* of the Trinity; or whether he meant to speak of God *as God*, without any reference to the distinction of persons; or to the *divine influence* which inspired the apostles,

3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan ^b filled thine heart ¹ to lie to ^c the Holy Ghost, and to

b Lu.22.3.

¹ or, to deceive.

c ver.9.

without reference to the peculiar offices which are commonly ascribed to the Holy Spirit. Or, in other words, is there a *distinction* here recognised between the *Father* and the *Holy Spirit*? That there is, will be apparent from the following considerations: (1.) If no such distinction is *intended*, it is remarkable that Peter did not use the usual and customary *name* of God. It does not appear why he guarded it so carefully as to denote that this offence was committed against the *Holy Ghost*, and the *Spirit of the Lord*. ver. 9. (2.) The name here used is the one employed in the Scriptures to designate the third person of the Trinity, as implying a distinction from the Father. See Matt. iii. 16; i. 18. 20; iii. 11; xii. 32; xviii. 19. Mark i. 8; iii. 29; xii. 36. Luke xii. 10. John xiv. 26; vii. 39; xx. 22. Acts iv. 8; v. 32, &c. (3.) Peter intended, doubtless, to designate an offence as committed particularly against the person, or influence, by which he and the other apostles were inspired. Ananias supposed that he could escape detection: and the offence was one, therefore, against the Inspirer of the apostles. Yet that was the Holy Ghost as *distinct from the Father*. See John xiv. 16, 17. 26; xv. 26; xvi. 7—11; xx. 22. Comp. Acts v. 32. The offence, therefore, being against him who was *sent* by the Father, who was appointed to a particular work, clearly supposes that the Holy Spirit is distinct from the Father. (4.) A farther incidental proof of this may be found in the fact that the sin here committed was one of peculiar magnitude; so great as to be deemed worthy of the immediate and signal vengeance of God. Yet the sin against the Holy Ghost is uniformly represented to be of this description. Comp. Matt. xii. 31, 32. Mark iii. 28, 29. As these sins evidently coincide in enormity, it is clear that the same class of sins is referred to in both places; or, in other words, the sin of Ananias was against the third person of the Trinity.—Two remarks may be made here. (1.) The Holy Ghost is a distinct person from the Father and the Son; or, in other words, there is a distinction of some kind in the Divine nature that may be denominated by the word *person*. This is clear from the fact that *sin* is said to have been committed against him; a sin which it was supposed could not be detected. *Sin*

keep ^a back *part* of the price of the land?

4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing

^a Nu.30.2. De.23.21. Ec.5.4.

cannot be committed against an *attribute* of God, or an *influence* from God. We cannot *lie unto* an attribute, or against wisdom, or power, or goodness; nor can we *lie unto* an *influence*, merely, of the Most High. Sin is committed against a *Being*, not against an *attribute*; and as a sin is here charged on Ananias against *the Holy Ghost*, it follows that the Holy Ghost has a *personal* existence; or there is such a distinction in the Divine essence as that it may be proper to *specify* a sin as committed peculiarly against him. In the same way sin may be represented as committed peculiarly against *the Father*, when his *name* is blasphemed; when his *dominion* is denied; when his *mercy* in sending his Son is called in question. Sin may be represented as committed against *the Son*, when his atonement is denied, his divinity assailed, his character derided, or his invitations slighted. And thus sin may be represented as committed against *the Holy Ghost* when his office of renewing the heart, or sanctifying the soul, is called in question, or when *his* work is ascribed to some malign or other influence. See Mark iii. 22—30. And as sin against the Son proves that he is in some sense distinct from *the Father*, so does sin against the Holy Ghost prove that in some sense he is distinct from the Father and the Son. (2.) The Holy Ghost is divine. This is proved, because he is represented here as being able to search the heart, and to detect insincerity and hypocrisy. Comp. Jer. xvii. 10. 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. 1 Cor. ii. 10. "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." Rev. ii. 23. And he is expressly *called* God. See Note on ver. 4.

4. *Whiles it remained*. As long as it remained unsold. This place proves that there was no *obligation* imposed on the disciples to *sell* their property. They who did it, did it voluntarily; and it does not appear that it was done by all, or expected to be done by all. ¶ *And after it was sold*, &c. Even after the property was *sold*, and Ananias had the money, still there was no obligation on him to devote it in this way. He had the disposal of it still. The apostle mentions this to show him

in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but ^b unto God.

5 And Ananias, hearing these words, ^c fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great ^d fear came on all them that heard these things.

^b Ps.139.4.

^c ver.10,11.

^d Ps.64.9.

that his offence was peculiarly aggravated. He was not *compelled* to sell his property; and he had not even the poor pretence that he was *obliged* to dispose of it, and was *tempted* to withhold it for his own use. It was *all* his, and might have been retained if he had chosen. ¶ *Thou hast not lied unto men*. Unto men *only*; or, it is not your *main* and *chief* offence, that you have attempted to deceive men. It is true that Ananias *had* attempted to deceive the apostles, and it is true also that this was a crime; but still, the principal magnitude of the offence was that he had attempted to deceive *God*. So small was his crime as committed against *men*, that it was lost sight of by the apostles; and the great, crowning sin of attempting to deceive *God* was brought fully into view. Thus David also saw his sin as committed against *God* to be so enormous, that he lost sight of it as an offence to men, and said, "Against thee, *thee ONLY*, have I sinned, and done this evil in *thy* sight." Ps. li. 4. ¶ *But unto God*. It has been *particularly* and *eminently* against God. This is true, because, (1.) He had professedly *devoted* it to God. The act, therefore, had express and direct reference to him. (2.) It was an attempt to deceive him. It implied the belief of Ananias that God would not detect the crime, or see the motives of the heart. (3.) It is the prerogative of God to judge of sincerity and hypocrisy; and this was a case, therefore, which came under his special notice. Comp. Ps. cxxxix. 1—4.—The word *God* here is evidently used in its plain and obvious sense, as denoting the *supreme divinity*; and the use of the word here shows that the Holy Ghost is *divine*; and the whole passage demonstrates, therefore, one of the important doctrines of the Christian religion, that the Holy Ghost is distinct from the Father and the Son, and yet is divine.

5. *And Ananias, hearing these words*, &c. Seeing that his guilt was known; and being charged with the enormous crime of attempting to deceive God. He had not expected to be thus exposed; and it is clear that the exposure and the charge came upon him unexpectedly and terri-

6 And the young men arose, wound ^a him up, and carried *him* out, and buried *him*.

7 And it was about the space of

a Jno. 19. 40.

bly, like a bolt of thunder. ¶ *Fell down*. Greek, Having fallen down. ¶ *Gave up the ghost*. This is an unhappy translation. The original means simply, *he expired*, or *he died*. Comp. Note, Matt. xxvii. 50. This remarkable fact may be accounted for in this way: (1.) It is evidently to be regarded as a *judgment* of God for the sin of Ananias and his wife. It was not the act of Peter, but of God; and was clearly designed to show his abhorrence of this sin. (See remarks on ver. 11. (2.) Though it was the act of God, yet it does not follow that it was not in connexion with the usual laws by which he governs men, or that he did not make use of natural means to do it. The sin was one of great aggravation. It was suddenly and unexpectedly detected. The fact that it was known; the solemn charge that he had *lied unto God*; struck him with horror. His conscience would reprove him for the enormity of his crime, and overwhelm him at the memory of his act of wickedness. These circumstances may be sufficient to account for this remarkable event. It has occurred in other cases that the consciousness of crime, or the fact of being suddenly detected, has given such a shock to the frame that it has never recovered from it. The effect *commonly* is that the memory of guilt preys secretly and silently upon the frame, until, worn out with the want of rest and peace, it sinks exhausted into the grave. But there have not been wanting instances where the shock has been so great as to destroy the vital powers at once, and plunge the wretched man, like Ananias, into eternity. It is not at all improbable that the shock in the case of Ananias was so great as at once to take his life. ¶ *Great fear came*, &c. Such a striking and awful judgment on insincerity and hypocrisy was fitted to excite awful emotions among the people. Sudden death always does it; but sudden death in immediate connexion with crime, is fitted much more deeply to affect the mind.

6. *And the young men*. The youth of the congregation; very probably young men who were in attendance as *servants*, or those whose business it was to attend on the congregation, and perform various offices when Christians celebrated their worship. (*Mosheim*.) The word used here

three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land

sometimes denotes a *servant*. It is used also, ver. 10, to denote *soldiers*, as they were commonly enlisted of the vigorous and young. The fact that they took up Ananias voluntarily, implies that they were accustomed to perform offices of servitude to the congregation. ¶ *Wound him up*. It was the usual custom with the Jews to wind the body up in many folds of linen before it was buried, commonly also with spices, to preserve it from putrefaction. See Notes on John xi. 44. It may be asked *why* he was so soon buried; and especially why he was hurried away without giving information to his wife. In reply to this, it may be remarked, 1. That it does not appear from the narrative that it was *known* that Sapphira was privy to the transaction, or was near at hand, or even that he had a wife, Ananias came *himself* and offered the money; and the judgment fell at once on him. 2. It was customary among the ancient Persians to bury the body almost immediately after death (*Jahn*); and it seems probable that the Jews, when the body was not embalmed, imitated the custom. It would also appear that this was an ancient custom among the Jews. See Gen. xxiii. 19; xxv. 9; xxxv. 29; xlviii. 7. 1 Kings xiii. 30. Different nations differ in their customs in burying the dead; and there is no impropriety in committing a body soon after death to the tomb. 3. There might have been some danger of an excitement and tumult in regard to this scene, if the corpse had not soon been removed; and as no valuable purpose could be answered by delaying the burial, the body was decently committed to the dust.

7. *And it was about the space*, &c. As Sapphira had been no less guilty than her husband, so it was ordered in the providence of God, that the same judgment should come upon both.

8. *For so much*. That is, for the sum which Ananias had presented. This was true, that this sum had been received for it; but it was also true that a larger sum had been received. It is as really a falsehood to deceive in this manner, as it would have been to have affirmed that they received much *more* than they actually did for the land. Falsehood consists in making an erroneous representation of

for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.

9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed ^a together

^a Ps. 50. 18, ver. 3.

a thing in any way for the purpose of deceiving. And *this* species is much more common than an open and bold lie, declaring what is in no sense true.

9. *Agreed together.* Conspired, or laid a plan. From this it seems that Sapphira was as guilty as her husband. ¶ *To tempt.* To try; to endeavour to impose on, or to deceive; that is, to act as if the Spirit of the Lord could not detect the crime. They did this by trying to see whether the Spirit of God could detect hypocrisy. ¶ *At the door.* Are near at hand. They had not yet returned. The dead were buried without the walls of cities; and this space of three hours, it seems, had elapsed before they returned from the burial. ¶ *Shall carry thee out.* This passage shows that it was by divine interposition or judgment that their lives were taken. The judgment was in immediate connexion with their crime, and was designed as an expression of the divine displeasure.

If it be asked here, *why* Ananias and Sapphira were punished in this severe and awful manner, an answer may be found in the following considerations: (1.) This was an atrocious crime; a deep and dreadful act of iniquity. It was committed knowingly, and without excuse. ver. 4. It was important that sudden and exemplary punishment should follow it, because the society of Christians was just then organized, and it was designed that it should be a *pure* society, and be regarded as a body of holy men. Much was gained by making this *impression* on the people, that sin could not be allowed in this new community, but would be detected and punished. (2.) God has often in a most solemn manner showed his abhorrence of hypocrisy and insincerity. By awful declarations and fearful judgments he has declared his displeasure at it. In a particular manner no small part of the preaching of the Saviour was employed in detecting the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, and denouncing heavy judgments on them. See the xxiii chapter of Matthew throughout, for the most sublime and awful denunciation of hypocrisy any where to be found. Comp. Mark xii. 15. Luke xii. 1. 1 Tim. iv. 2. Job viii. 13; xiii. 16; xv. 34; xx. 5; xxxvi. 13. Matt. vii. 5. Luke xi. 44. In the very

to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband *are* at the door, and shall carry thee out.

beginning of the Christian church, therefore, it was important, by a decided and awful act, to *impress* upon the church and the world the danger and guilt of hypocrisy. Well did the Saviour know that it would be one of the most insidious and deadly foes to the purity of the church; and at its very *threshold*, therefore, he set up this solemn warning to guard it; and laid the bodies of Ananias and Sapphira in the path of every hypocrite that would enter the church. If they enter and are destroyed, they cannot plead that they were not fully warned. If they practise iniquity *in* the church, they cannot plead ignorance of the fact that God intends to detect and punish them. (3.) The apostles were just then establishing their authority. They claimed to be under the influence of inspiration. To establish that, it was necessary to show that they could know the views and motives of those who became connected with the church. If easily imposed on, it would go far to destroy their authority and their claim to infallibility. If they showed that they could detect hypocrisy, even where most artfully concealed, it would establish the divine authority of their message. At the *commencement* of their work, therefore, they gave this decisive and most awful proof that they were under the guidance of an infallible Teacher. (4.) This case does not stand alone in the history of the world. It is clear from other instances that the apostles had the power of punishing sinners, and that a violation of the commands of Christ was attended by sudden and fearful judgments. See 1 Cor. xi. 30. See the case of Elymas the sorcerer, in Acts xiii. 8—11. (5.) Neither does this event stand alone in the history of the world. Acts of judgment sometimes occur as sudden and decided, in the providence of God, as in this case. The profane man, the drunkard, the profligate is sometimes as suddenly stricken down as in this instance. Cases have not been uncommon where the blasphemer has been smitten in death with the curse on his lips; and God often thus comes forth in judgment to slay the wicked, and to show that there is a God that reigns in the earth. This narrative cannot be objected to as improbable until *all* such cases are disposed of; nor can this inflict-

10 Then ^a fell she down straight-way at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.

a ver. 5.

tion be regarded as unjust, until all the instances where men die by remorse of conscience, or by the direct judgment of heaven, are *proved* to be unjust also.

In view of this narrative, we may remark, (1.) That God searches the heart, and knows the purposes of the soul. Comp. Ps. cxxxix. (2.) God judges the *motives* of men. It is not so much the *external* act, as it is the views and feelings by which it is prompted, that determines the character of the act. (3.) God will bring forth sin that man may not be able to detect; or that may elude human justice. The day is coming when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, and God will reward every man according as his works shall be. (4.) Fraud and hypocrisy will be detected. They are often revealed in this life. The providence of God often lays them open to human view, and overwhelms the soul in shame at the guilt which was long concealed. But if not in this life, yet the day is coming when they will be disclosed, and the sinner shall stand *revealed* to an assembled universe. (5.) We have here an illustration of the powers of conscience. If *such* was its overwhelming effect *here*, what will it be when *all* the crimes of the life shall be disclosed in the day of judgment, and when the soul shall sink to the woes of hell. Through *eternity* the conscience shall do its office; and these terrible inflictions shall go on from age to age, for ever and ever, in the dark world of hell. (6.) We see here the guilt of attempting to impose on God in regard to *property*. There is no subject in which men are more liable to hypocrisy; none in which they are more apt to keep back a *part*. Christians professedly devote *ALL* that they have, to God. They profess to believe that God has a *right* to the silver and the gold, and the cattle on a thousand hills. Ps. l. 10. Their *property*, as well as their bodies and their spirits, they have devoted to him; and profess to desire to employ it as *he* shall direct and please. And yet, is it not clear, that the sin of Ananias has not ceased in the church? How many professing Christians there are, who give *nothing* really to God; who contribute nothing for the poor and needy;

11 And ^b great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

12 And by the hands of the apostles were ^c many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and

b c. 2. 43.

c c. 4. 30. Ro. 15. 19. He. 2. 4.

who give nothing, or next to nothing, to any purposes of benevolence; who would devote "millions" for their own gratification, and their families, "but not a cent for *tribute*" to God. The case of Ananias is, to all such, a case of most fearful warning. And on no point should Christians more faithfully examine themselves than in regard to the professed devotion of their *property* to God. If God punished this sin in the beginning of the Christian church, he will do it still in its progress; and in nothing have professed Christians more to fear the wrath of God, than on this very subject. (7.) Sinners should fear and tremble before God. He holds their breath in his hands. He can cut them down in an instant. The bold blasphemer, the unjust, the liar, the scoffer, he can destroy in a moment, and sink them in all the woes of hell. Nor have they security that he will not do it. The profane man has no evidence that he will live to finish the curse which he has begun; nor the drunkard, that he will again become sober; nor the seducer, that God will not arrest him in his act of wickedness, and send him down to hell! The sinner walks over his grave, and over hell! In an instant he may die, and be summoned to the judgment-seat of God! How awful it is to sin in a world like this; and how fearful the doom which *must* soon overtake the ungodly.

12. *And by the hands, &c.* By the apostles. This verse should be read in connexion with the 15th, to which it belongs. ¶ *Signs and wonders.* Miracles. See Note, Acts ii. 43. ¶ *With one accord.* With one mind, or intention. Note, ch. i. 14. ¶ *In Solomon's porch.* See Notes, Matt. xxi. 12. John x. 23. They were doubtless there for the purpose of worship. It does not mean that they were there constantly, but at the regular periods of worship. Probably they had two designs in this; one was, to join in the public worship of God in the usual manner with the people, for they did not design to leave the temple-service; the other was, that they might have opportunity to preach to the people assembled there. In the presence of the great multitudes who came up to worship, they had an opportunity of mak-

they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.

13 And^a of the rest durst no man join himself to them, but^b the people magnified them.

14 And believers were the more

^a Jno. 12. 42.

^b c. 4. 21.

ing known the doctrines of Jesus, and of confirming them by miracles, the reality of which could not be denied, and which could not be resisted, as proofs that Jesus was the Messiah.

13. *And of the rest.* Different interpretations have been given of this expression. Lightfoot supposes that by *the rest* are meant the remainder of the one hundred and twenty disciples of whom Ananias had been one; and that they feared to put themselves on an equality with the apostles. But this interpretation seems to be far-fetched. Kuinöel supposes that by *the rest* are meant those who had not already joined with the apostles, whether Christians or Jews, and that they were deterred by the fate of Ananias. Pricæus, Morus, Rosenmüller, Schleusner, &c. suppose that by *the rest* are meant the *rich* men, or the men of authority and influence among the Jews, of whom Ananias was one, and that they were deterred from it by the fate of Ananias. This is by far the most probable opinion, because, (1.) There is an evident contrast between them and the people; *the rest*, i. e. the others of the rich and great, feared to join with them; but *the people*, the common people, magnified them. (2.) The fate of Ananias was fitted to have this effect on the rich and great. (3.) Similar instances had occurred before, that the great, though they believed on Jesus, yet were afraid to come forth publicly and profess him before men. See John xii. 42, 43; v. 44. (4.) The phrase *the rest* denotes sometimes that which is more excellent, or which is superior in value or importance to something else. See Luke xii. 26. ¶ *Join himself.* Become united to, or associated with. The rich and the great then, as now, stood aloof from them, and were deterred by fear or shame from professing attachment to the Lord Jesus. ¶ *But the people.* The mass of the people; the body of the nation. ¶ *Magnified them.* Honoured them; regarded them with reverence and fear.

14. *And believers.* This is the name by which Christians were designated, because one of the main things that distinguished them was that they *believed* that Jesus was the Christ. It is also an inci-

added to the Lord, multitudes^c both of men and women;))

15 Inasmuch that they brought forth the sick^d into the streets, and laid *them* on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter

^c c. 2. 47.

^d or, in every street.

dental proof that none should join themselves to the church who are not *believers*, i. e. who do not profess to be Christians in heart and in life. ¶ *Were the more added.* The effect of all things was to increase the number of converts. Their persecutions, their preaching, and the judgment of God, all tended to impress the minds of the people, and to lead them to the Lord Jesus Christ. Comp. ch. iv. 4. Though the judgment of God had the effect of deterring hypocrites from entering the church; though it produced awe and caution; yet still, the number of true converts was increased. An effort to keep the church pure by wholesome discipline, by cutting off unworthy members, however rich or honoured, so far from weakening its true strength, has a tendency greatly to increase its numbers as well as its purity. Men will not seek to enter a corrupt church; or regard it as worth any thought to be connected with a society that does not endeavour to be pure. ¶ *Multitudes.* Comp. ch. iv. 4.

15. *Inasmuch.* So that. This should be connected with ver. 12. Many miracles were wrought by the apostles, *inasmuch*, &c. ¶ *They brought forth.* The people, or the friends of the sick, brought them forth. ¶ *Beds.* *κλινῶν.* This word denotes usually the *soft* and *valuable* beds on which the rich commonly lay. And it means that the rich, as well as the poor, were laid in the path of Peter and the other apostles. ¶ *Couches.* *καρβύκων.* The coarse and hard couches on which the poor used to lie. Mark ii. 4. 9. 11, 12; vi. 55. John v. 8—12. Acts ix. 33. ¶ *The shadow of Peter.* That is, they were laid in the path so that the shadow of Peter, as he walked, might pass over them. Perhaps the sun was near setting, and the lengthened shadow of Peter might be thrown afar across the way. They were not able to approach him on account of the crowd; and they *imagined* that if they could *any how* come under his influence, they might be healed. The sacred writer does not say, however, that any *were* healed in this way; nor that they were commanded to do this. He simply states the *impression* which was on the minds of the people, that it *might be*.

passing by might overshadow some of them.

¶ There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing ^a sick folks, and them which were vexed with

a Mar. 16. 17, 18. Jno. 14. 12.

Whether they were healed by this, it is left for us merely to conjecture. An instance somewhat similar is recorded in Acts xix. 12, where it is expressly said that the sick were healed by contact with *handkerchiefs* and *aprons* that were brought from the body of Paul. Comp. also Matt. ix. 21, 22, where the woman said respecting Jesus, "If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole." ¶ *Might overshadow.* That his shadow might pass over them. Though there is no evidence that any were healed in this way, yet it shows the full belief of the people that Peter had the power of working miracles. Peter was supposed by them to be eminently endowed with this power, because it was by him that the lame man in the temple had been healed (ch. iii. 4—6), and because he had been most prominent in his addresses to the people. The persons who are specified in this verse were those who dwelt at Jerusalem.

16. *There came also, &c.* Attracted by the fame of Peter's miracles, as the people formerly had been by the miracles of the Lord Jesus. ¶ *Vexed.* Troubled, afflicted, or tormented. ¶ *Unclean spirits.* Possessed with devils; called *unclean* because they prompted to sin and impurity of life. See Notes on Matt. iv. 23, 24. ¶ *And they were healed.* Of these persons it is expressly affirmed that they were healed. Of those who were so laid as that the shadow of Peter might pass over them, there is no such affirmation.

17. *Then the high-priest.* Probably Caiaphas. Comp. John xi. 49. It seems from this place that he belonged to the sect of the Sadducees. It is certain that he had signalized himself by opposition to the Lord Jesus and to his cause, constantly. ¶ *Rose up.* This expression is sometimes *redundant*, and at others it means simply to *begin* to do a thing, or to resolve to do it. Comp. Luke xv. 18. ¶ *And all they that were with him.* That is, all they that coincided with him in doctrine or opinion; or in other words, that portion of the sanhedrim that was composed of *Sadducees*. There was a strong party of Sadducees in the sanhedrim; and perhaps at this time it was so strong a majority as to be

unclean spirits: and ^b they were healed every one.

17 Then the high-priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) ^c and were filled with ¹ indignation,

b Ja. 5. 16.

c c. 4. 1, 2.

1 or, envy.

able to control its decisions. Comp. Acts xxiii. 6. ¶ *Which is the sect.* The word translated *sect* here is that from which we have derived our word *heresy*. It means simply *sect*, or *party*, and is not used in a bad sense as implying reproach, or even error. The idea which we attach to it of error, and of denying fundamental doctrines in religion, is one that does not occur in the New Testament. ¶ *Sadducees.* See Notes, Matt. iii. 7. The main doctrine of this sect was the denial of the resurrection of the dead. The reason why they were particularly opposed to the apostles, rather than the Pharisees, was that the apostles dwelt much on the *resurrection of the Lord Jesus*, which, if true, completely overthrew their doctrine. All the converts, therefore, that were made to Christianity, tended to diminish their numbers and influence; and also to establish the belief of the *Pharisees* in the doctrine of the resurrection. So long, therefore, as the effect of the labours of the apostles was to establish one of the main doctrines of the *Pharisees*, and to confute the *Sadducees*, so long we may suppose that the *Pharisees* would either favour them or be silent; and so long the *Sadducees* would be opposed to them, and enraged against them. One sect will often see with composure the progress of another that it really hates, if it will humble a rival. Even opposition to the gospel will sometimes be silent, provided the spread of religion will tend to humble and mortify those against whom we may be opposed. ¶ *Were filled with indignation.* Greek, *Zeal*. The word denotes any kind of *fervour* or *warmth*, and may be applied to any warm or violent affection of the mind, either *envy*, *wrath*, *zeal*, or *love*. Acts xiii. 45. John ii. 17. Rom. x. 2. 2 Cor vii. 7; xi. 2. Here it probably includes *envy* and *wrath*. They were *envious* at the success of the apostles; at the number of converts that were made to a doctrine that they hated; they were *envious* that the *Pharisees* were deriving such an accession of strength to their doctrine of the resurrection; and they were *indignant* that they regarded so little their

18 And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.^a

19 But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,

20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all^b the words^c of this life.

21 And when they heard *that*, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But^d the high-priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate

^a c.12.5-7; 16.23-27. ^b Ex.24.3. ^c Jno.6.63,68; 17.8.

authority, and disobeyed the solemn injunction of the sanhedrim. Comp. ch. iv. 18—21.

18. *The common prison.* The public prison; or the prison for the keeping of common and notorious offenders.

19. *But the angel of the Lord.* This does not denote any particular angel, but simply an angel. The article is not used in the original. The word *angel* denotes properly a messenger, and particularly it is applied to the pure spirits that are sent to this world on errands of mercy. See Note, Matt. i. 20. The case here was evidently a miracle. An angel was employed for this special purpose; and the design might have been, (1.) To reprove the Jewish rulers, and to convince them of their guilt in resisting the gospel of God; (2.) To convince the apostles more firmly of the protection and approbation of God; (3.) To encourage them more and more in their work, and in the faithful discharge of their high duty; and (4.) To give the people a new and impressive proof of the truth of the message which they bore. That they were imprisoned would be known to the people. That they were made as secure as possible, was also known. When, therefore, the next morning, before they could have been tried or acquitted, they were found again in the temple, delivering the same message still, it was a new and striking proof that they were sent by God.

20. *In the temple.* In a public and conspicuous place. In this way there would be a most striking exhibition of their boldness; a proof that God had delivered them; and a manifestation of their purpose to obey God rather than man. ¶ *All the words.* All the doctrines. Comp. John vi. 68, "Thou hast the words of eternal

of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

22 But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned and told,

23 Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within.

24 Now when the high-priest and^e the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow.

^d c.4.5,6.

^e c.4.1.

life." ¶ *Of this life.* Pertaining to life to the eternal life which they taught through the resurrection and life of Jesus. The word *life* is used sometimes to express the whole of religion, as opposed to the spiritual death of sin. See John i. 4; iii. 36. Their deliverance from prison was not that they might be idle, and escape to a place of safety. Again they were to engage at once in the toils, and perils, which they had just before encountered. God delivers us from danger sometimes that we may plunge into new dangers; he preserves us from calamity that we may be tried in some new furnace of affliction; and he calls us to encounter trials simply because he demands it, and as an expression of gratitude to him for his gracious interposition.

21. *Early in the morning.* Greek, At the break of day. Comp. Luke xxiv. 1. John viii. 2. ¶ *Called the council together.* The sanhedrim, or the great council of the nation. This was clearly for the purpose of trying the apostles for disregarding their commandments. ¶ *And all the senate.* Greek, Eldership. Probably these were not a part of the sanhedrim, but were men of age and experience, who in ch. iv. 8, xxv. 15, are called *elders of the Jews*, and who were present for the sake of counsel and advice in a case of emergency.

23. *Found we shut.* It had not been broken open; and there was therefore clear proof that they had been delivered by the interposition of God. Nor could they have been released by the guard, for they were keeping watch, as if unconscious that any thing had happened, and the officers had the only means of entering the prison.

24. *The captain of the temple.* See

25 Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.

26 Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for ^a they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.

27 And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the coun-

^a Matt. 21. 26.

^b c. 4. 13.

Notes, ch. iv. 1. ¶ *Doubted of them.* They were in *perplexity* about these things. The word rendered *doubted* denotes that state of anxiety which arises when a man *has lost his way*, or when he does not know what to do to escape from a difficulty. See Luke ix. 7. ¶ *Whereunto this would grow.* What this *would be*; or what would be the result or end of these events. For (1.) Their authority was disregarded; (2.) God had opposed them by a miracle; (3.) The doctrines of the apostles were gaining ground; (4.) Their efforts to oppose them had been in vain. They need *not* have doubted; but sinners are not disposed to be convinced of the truth of religion.

26. *Without violence.* Not by force; not by *binding* them. Comp. Matt. xxvii. 2. The command of the sanhedrim was sufficient to secure their presence, as they did not intend to refuse to answer for any alleged violation of the laws. Besides, their going before the council would give them another noble opportunity to bear witness to the truth of the gospel. Christians, when charged with a violation of the laws of the land, should not refuse to answer. Acts xxv. 11, "If I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die." It is a part of our religion to yield obedience to all the just laws of the land, and to evince respect for all that are in authority. Rom. xiii. 1—7. ¶ *For they feared the people.* The people were favourable to the apostles. If violence had been attempted, or they had been taken in a cruel and forcible manner, the consequence would have been a tumult, and bloodshed. In this way, also, the apostles showed that they were not disposed to excite tumult. Opposition by them would have excited commotion; and though *they* would have been rescued, yet they resolved to show that they were not obstinate, contumacious, or rebellious, but

cil: and the high-priest asked them,

28 Saying, Did not we ^b straitly command you, that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood ^c upon us.

29 Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ^d ought to obey God rather than men.

30 'The God of our fathers raised

^c Matt. 27. 25. c. 2. 23, 36; 3. 15; 7. 52.

^d c. 4. 19.

were disposed, as far as it could be done with a clear conscience, to yield obedience to the laws of the land.

28. *Straitly command you.* Did we not command you with a *threat*? ch. iv. 17, 18. 21. ¶ *In this name.* In the name of Jesus. ¶ *Ye have filled Jerusalem.* This, though not so designed, was an honourable tribute to the zeal and fidelity of the apostles. When Christians are arraigned or persecuted, it is well if the only charge which their enemies can bring against them is that they have been distinguished for zeal and success in propagating their religion. See 1 Pet. iv. 16, "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf." Also ver. 13—15. ¶ *Intend to bring this man's blood upon us.* To bring *one's blood* upon another is a phrase denoting to hold or to prove him guilty of murdering the innocent. The expression here charges them with designing to prove that they had put Jesus to death when he was innocent; to convince *the people* of this, and thus to enrage them against the sanhedrim; and also to prove that they were guilty, and were exposed to the divine vengeance for having put the Messiah to death. Comp. ch. ii. 23. 36; iii. 15; vii. 52. That the apostles *did* intend to charge them with being guilty of murder, is clear; but it is observable that on *this occasion* they had said nothing of this; and it is further observable that they did not charge it on them *except in their presence*. See the places just referred to. They took no pains to spread this among the people, *except as the people were accessory to the crime of the rulers.* ch. ii. 23. 36. Their consciences were not at ease, and the remembrance of the death of Jesus would occur to them at once at the sight of the apostles.

29. *We ought to obey, &c.* See Note, ch. iv. 19.

30. *Raised up Jesus.* This refers to his

up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged ^a on a tree.

31 Him hath God exalted ^b with

^a Ga. 3. 13. 1 Pet. 2. 24.

^b Ph. 2. 9.

resurrection. ¶ *Hanged on a tree.* That is, on the cross. Gal. iii. 13. 1 Pet. ii. 24. Acts x. 39; xiii. 29. This is the amount of Peter's defence. He begins with the great principle (ver. 29), which they could not gainsay, that God ought to be obeyed rather than man. He then proceeds to state that they were convinced that God had raised up Jesus from the dead. And as they had such decisive evidence of that, and were commanded by the authority of the Lord Jesus to be witnesses of that, and had constant evidence that God had done it, they were not at liberty to be silent. They were bound to obey God rather than the sanhedrim, and to make known every where the fact that the Lord Jesus was risen. The remark that God had raised up Jesus whom they had slain, does not seem to have been made to irritate or to reproach them, but mainly to identify the person that had been raised. It was also a confirmation of the truth and reality of the miracle. Of his death they had no doubt, for they had been at pains to certify it. John xix. 31—34. It is certain, however, that Peter did not shrink from charging on them their guilt; nor was he at any pains to soften or mitigate the severe charge that they had murdered their own Messiah.

31. *Him hath God exalted.* See Note, ch. ii. 33. ¶ *To be a Prince.* βασιλεως. See Note, Acts iii. 15. In that place he is called the Prince of life. Here it means that he is actually in the exercise of the office of a prince or a king, at the right hand of his Father. The title Prince, or King, was one which was well known as applied to the Messiah. It denotes that he has dominion and power, especially the power which is needful to give repentance and the pardon of sins. ¶ *A Saviour.* See Note, Matt. i. 21. ¶ *To give repentance.* The word repentance here is equivalent to reformation, and a change of life. The expression here does not differ from what is said in ch. iii. 26. ¶ *To Israel.* This word properly denotes the Jews; but his office was not to be confined to the Jews. Other passages show that it would be also extended to the Gentiles. The reasons why the Jews are particularly specified here are, probably, (1.) Because the Messiah was long promised to the Jewish people, and his

his right hand to be a ^c Prince and a ^d Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

^c Is. 9. 6.

^d Matt. 1. 21.

first work was there; and (2.) Because Peter was addressing Jews, and was particularly desirous of leading them to repentance. ¶ *Forgiveness of sins.* Pardon of sin; the act which can be performed by God only. Mark ii. 7.

If it be asked, in what sense the Lord Jesus gives repentance, or how his exaltation is connected with it, we may answer, (1.) His exaltation is evidence that his work was accepted, and thus a foundation is laid by which repentance is available, and may be connected with pardon. Unless there was some way of forgiveness, sorrow for sin would be of no value, even if exercised. The relents of a culprit condemned for murder, would be of no avail unless the executive can consistently pardon him; nor would relents in hell be of avail, for there is no promise of forgiveness. But Jesus Christ by his death has laid a foundation by which repentance may be accepted. (2.) He is intrusted with all power in heaven and earth with reference to this, to apply his work to men; or in other words, to bring them to repentance. See John xvii. 2. Matt. xxviii. 18. (3.) His exaltation is immediately connected with the bestowment of the Holy Spirit, by whose influence men are brought to repentance. John xvi. 7—11. The Spirit is represented as being sent by him as well as by the Father. John xv. 26; xvi. 7. (4.) Jesus has power in this state of exaltation over all things that can affect the mind. He sends his ministers; he directs the events of sickness or disappointment; of health or prosperity; that will influence the heart. There is no doubt that he can so recall the sins of the past life, and refresh the memory, as to overwhelm the soul in the consciousness of guilt. Thus also he can appeal to man by his goodness, and by a sense of his mercies; and especially he can so present a view of his life and death as to affect the heart, and show the evil of the past life of the sinner. Knowing the heart, he knows all the avenues by which it can be approached; and in an instant he can overwhelm the soul with the remembrance of crime.

It was proper that the power of pardon should be lodged with the same being that has the power of producing repentance. Because, 1. The one appropriately follows the other. 2. They are parts of

32 And we are his witnesses ^a of these things; and *so is* also the Holy Ghost, ^b whom God hath given to them that obey him.

33 When they heard *that*, they ^c

^a Lu. 24. 47.

^b c. 2. 4.

^c c. 7. 54.

the same great work, the work which the Saviour came to do, *to remove sin with all its effects from the human soul*. This power of *pardon* Jesus exercised when he was on the earth; and this he can now dispense in the heavens. Mark ii. 9—11.

And from this we may learn, (1.) That Jesus Christ is *divine*. It is a dictate of natural religion that none can forgive sins against God, but God himself. None can pardon but the being who has been offended. And this is also the dictate of the Bible. The power of *pardon* sin is one that God claims as *his* prerogative; and it is clear that it can appertain to no other. See Isa. xliii. 25. Dan. ix. 9. Ps. cxxx. 4. Yet Jesus Christ exercised this power when on earth; gave *evidence* that the exercise of that power was one that was acceptable to God by working a miracle, and removing the *consequences* of sin with which *God* had visited the sinner (Matt. ix. 6); and exercises it still in heaven. He must, therefore, be divine. (2.) The sinner is dependent on him for the exercise of repentance, and forgiveness. (3.) The proud sinner must be humbled at his feet. He must be willing to come and receive eternal life at *his* hands. No step is more humiliating than this for proud and hardened men; and there is none which they are more reluctant to do. We always shrink from coming into the presence of one whom we have offended; we are extremely reluctant to confess a fault; but it *must be done*, or the soul *must be* lost for ever. (4.) Christ has *power* to pardon the greatest offender. He is exalted for this purpose; and he is fitted to his work. Even his murderers he could pardon; and no sinner need fear that he who is a *Prince and a Saviour at the right hand of God*, is unable to pardon every sin. To him we may come with confidence; and when pressed with the consciousness of the blackest crimes, and when we must feel that we deserve eternal death, we may confidently roll all on his arm.

32. *And we are witnesses*. For this purpose they had been appointed. ch. i. 8. 21. 22; ii. 32; iii. 15. Luke xxiv. 48. ¶ *Of these things*. Particularly of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and of the events

were cut *to the heart*, and took counsel to slay them.

34 Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, ^a a doctor of the law, had in

^d c. 22. 3.

which had followed it. Perhaps, however, he meant to include every thing pertaining to the life, teachings, and death of the Lord Jesus. ¶ *And so is also*, &c. The descent of the Holy Ghost to endow them with remarkable gifts (ch. ii. 1—4), to awaken and convert such a multitude (ch. ii. 41; iv. 4; v. 14), was an unanswerable attestation of the truth of these doctrines, and of the Christian religion. So manifest and decided was the presence of God attending them, that *they* could have no doubt that what they said was true; and so open and public was this attestation, that it was an evidence to all the people of the truth of their doctrine.

33. *When they heard that*. That which the apostle Peter had said, to wit, that they were guilty of murder; that Jesus was raised up; and that he still lived as the Messiah. ¶ *They were cut to the heart*. The word used here properly denotes *to cut with a saw*; and as applied to the *mind*, it means to be agitated with *rage* and *indignation*, as if wrath should seize upon the mind as a saw does upon wood, and tear it violently, or agitate it severely. It is commonly used in connexion with *the heart*, and means that the heart is violently agitated, and rent with rage. See ch. vii. 54. It is not used elsewhere in the New Testament. The *reasons* why they were thus indignant were, doubtless, (1.) Because the apostles had disregarded their command; (2.) Because they charged them with murder; (3.) Because they affirmed the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus, and thus tended to overthrow the sect of the Sadducees.—The effect of the doctrines of the gospel is, often, to make men enraged. ¶ *Took counsel*. The word rendered *took counsel* denotes commonly *to will*; then, *to deliberate*; and sometimes, *to decree*, or *to determine*. It doubtless implies here that *their minds were made up to do it*; but probably the formal decree was not passed to put them to death.

34. *There stood up one*. He rose, as is usual in deliberative assemblies to speak. ¶ *In the council*. In the sanhedrim. ch. iv. 15. ¶ *A Pharisee*. The high-priest and those who had been most active in opposing the apostles were Sadducees. The Pharisees were opposed to them,

reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space :

35 And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.

¹ In the 3d year before the account called A. D.

particularly on the doctrine in regard to which the apostles were so strenuous, the resurrection of the dead. See Note, Matt. iii. 7. Comp. Acts xxiii. 6. ¶ *Gamaliel*. This name was very common among the Jews. Dr. Lightfoot says that this man was the teacher of Paul (Acts xxii. 3), the son of the *Simon* who took the Saviour in his arms (Luke ii.), and the grandson of the famous *Hillel*, and was known among the Jews by the title of *Rabban Gamaliel the elder*. There were other men of this name, who were also eminent among the Jews. This man is said to have died eighteen years before the destruction of Jerusalem, and he died as he had lived, a Pharisee. There is not the least evidence that he was a friend of the Christian religion; but he was evidently a man of far more liberal views than the other members of the sanhedrim. ¶ *A doctor of the law*. That is, a teacher of the Jewish law; one whose province it was to interpret the laws of Moses, and probably to preserve and transmit the traditional laws of the Jews. See Note, Matt. xv. 3. So celebrated was he, that Saul of Tarsus went to Jerusalem to receive the benefit of his instructions. Acts xxii. 3. ¶ *Had in reputation among all the people*. Honoured by all the people. His advice was likely, therefore, to be respected. ¶ *To put the apostles forth*. This was done doubtless, because, if the apostles had been suffered to remain, it was apprehended that they would take fresh courage, and be confirmed in their purposes. It was customary, besides, when they deliberated, to command those accused to retire. ch. iv. 15. ¶ *A little space*. A little time. Luke xxii. 58.

36. For before those days. The advice of Gamaliel was to suffer these men to go on. The arguments by which he enforced his advice were, (1.) That there were cases or precedents in point (ver. 36, 37); and (2.) That if it should turn out to be of God, it would be a solemn affair to be involved in the consequences of opposing him. How long before those days this transaction occurred, cannot now be de-

36 For before these days ¹ rose up Theudas boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as ² obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.

² or, believed.

termined, as it is not certain to what case Gamaliel refers. ¶ *Rose up*. That is, commenced or excited an insurrection. ¶ *Theudas*. This was a name quite common among the Jews. Of this man nothing more is known than is here recorded. Josephus (Antiq. b. xx. ch. v.) mentions one *Theudas*, in the time of *Fadus* the procurator of Judea, in the reign of the emperor Claudius (A. D. 45 or 46), who persuaded a great part of the people to take their effects with him and follow him to the river Jordan. He told them he was a prophet, and that he would divide the river, and lead them over. Fadus, however, came suddenly upon them, and slew many of them. Theudas was taken alive and conveyed to Jerusalem, and there beheaded. But this occurred at least ten or fifteen years after this discourse of Gamaliel. Many efforts have been made to reconcile Luke and Josephus, on the supposition that they refer to the same man. Lightfoot supposed that Josephus had made an error in chronology. But there is no reason to suppose that there is reference to the same event; and the fact that Josephus has not recorded the insurrection referred to by Gamaliel, does not militate at all against the account in the Acts. For, (1.) Luke, for any thing that appears to the contrary, is quite as credible an historian as Josephus. (2.) The name *Theudas* was a common name among the Jews; and there is no improbability that there were two leaders of an insurrection of this name. If it is improbable, the improbability would affect Josephus's credit as much as that of Luke. (3.) It is altogether improbable that Gamaliel should refer to a case which was not well authenticated; and that Luke should record a speech of this kind unless it was delivered, when it would be so easy to detect the error. (4.) Josephus has recorded many instances of insurrection and revolt. He has represented the country as in an unsettled state, and by no means professes to give an account of all that occurred. Thus he says (Antiq. xvii. x. § 4) that there were "at this time ten thousand other disorders in Judea;"

37 After this man, rose up Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he ^a also perished; and

^a Lu. 13. 1, 2.

and (§ 8) that "Judea was full of robberies." When this *Theudas* lived, cannot be ascertained; but as Gamaliel mentions him before Judas of Galilee, it is probable that he lived not far from the time that our Saviour was born; at a time when many false prophets appeared, claiming to be the Messiah. ¶ *Boasting himself to be somebody.* Claiming to be an eminent prophet probably, or the Messiah. ¶ *Obedied him.* The word used here is the one commonly used to denote belief. As many as *believed* on him, or gave credit to his pretensions.

37. *Judas of Galilee.* Josephus has given an account of this man (Antiq. b. xvii. ch. x. § 5), and calls him a *Galilean*. He afterwards calls him a *Gaulonite*, and says he was of the city of *Gamala* (Antiq. xviii. i. 1). In this place, he says that the revolt took place under *Cyrenius*, a Roman senator, who came into "Syria to be judge of that nation, and to take account of their substance." "Moreover," says he, "Cyrenius came himself into Judea, which was now added to the province of Syria, to take an account of their substance, and to dispose of Archelaus's money." "Yet Judas, taking with him Saddouk, a Pharisee, became zealous to draw them to a revolt, who both said that this taxation was no better than an introduction to slavery, and exhorted the nation to assert their liberty," &c. This revolt, he says, was the commencement of the series of revolts and calamities that terminated in the destruction of the city, temple, and nation. ¶ *In the days of the taxing.* Or rather, the *enrolling, or the census*. Josephus says it was designed to take an account of their substance. Comp. Luke ii. 1, 2.

38. *Refrain from these men.* Cease to oppose them, or to threaten them. The reason why he advised this he immediately adds, that if it were of men, it would come to nought; if of God, they could not overthrow it. ¶ *This counsel.* This plan, or purpose. If the apostles had originated it for the purposes of imposture. ¶ *It will come to nought.* Gamaliel inferred that from the two instances which he specified. They had been suppressed without the interference of the sanhedrim; and he inferred that *this* would also die away if it was a human device. It will be re-

all, *even* as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.

38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them

membered that this is the mere advice of Gamaliel, who was not inspired; and that this opinion should not be adduced to guide us, except as it was an instance of great shrewdness and prudence. It is doubtless right to oppose *error* in the proper way and with the proper temper, not with arms, or vituperation, or with the civil power, but with argument and kind entreaty. But the sentiment of Gamaliel is full of wisdom in regard to error. For, (1.) The very way to exalt error into notice, and to confirm men in it, is to oppose it in a harsh, authoritative, and unkind manner. (2.) Error, if left alone, will often die away itself. The interest of men in it will often cease as soon as it ceases to be opposed; and having nothing to fan the flame, it will expire. It is not so with truth. (3.) In this respect the remark may be applied to the Christian religion. It has stood too long, and in too many circumstances of prosperity and adversity, to be of men. It has been subjected to all trials from its pretended friends and real foes; and it still lives as vigorous and flourishing as ever. Other kingdoms have changed; empires have risen and fallen since Gamaliel spoke this; systems of opinion and belief have had their day, and expired; but the preservation of the Christian religion, unchanged through so many revolutions, and in so many fiery trials, shows that it is not of men, but of God. The argument for the divine origin of the Christian religion from its perpetuity, is one that can be applied to no other system that has been, or that now exists. For Christianity has been opposed in every form. It confers no temporal conquests, and appeals to no base and strong native passions. Mahometanism is supported by the sword and the state; paganism relies on the arm of the civil power and the terrors of superstition, and is sustained by all the corrupt passions of men; atheism and infidelity have been short-lived, varying in their forms, dying to-day, and to-morrow starting up in a new form; never organized, consolidated, or pure; and never tending to promote the peace or happiness of men. Christianity, without arms or human power, has lived, holding its steady and triumphant movements among men, regardless alike of the opposition of

alone : ^a for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought :

^a Pr.21.30. Is.8.10. Matt.15.13.

39 But if ^b it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it : lest haply ye be found even to fight ^c against God.

^b Job 34.29. 1Cor.1.25. ^c c.9.5; 23.9.

its foes, and of the treachery of its pretended friends. If the opinion of Gamaliel was just, it is from God; and the Jews particularly should regard as important, an argument derived from the opinion of one of the wisest of their ancient Rabbins.

39. *But if it be of God.* If God is the author of this religion. From this it seems that Gamaliel supposed that it was at least possible that this religion was divine. He evinced a far more candid mind than did the rest of the Jews; but still, it does not appear that he was entirely convinced. The arguments which could not but stagger the Jewish sanhedrim were those drawn from the resurrection of Jesus, the miracle on the day of Pentecost, the healing of the lame man in the temple, and the release of the apostles from the prison. ¶ *Ye cannot overthrow it.* Because, (1.) God has almighty power, and can execute his purposes; (2.) Because he is unchanging, and will not be diverted from his plans. Job xxiii. 13, 14. The plan which God forms *must* be accomplished. All the devices of man are feebleness when opposed to him, and he can dash them in pieces in an instant. The prediction of Gamaliel has been fulfilled. Men have opposed Christianity in every way, but in vain. They have reviled it; have persecuted it; have resorted to argument and to ridicule, to fire, and fagot, and sword; they have called in the aid of science; but all has been in vain. The more it has been crushed, the more it has risen, and still exists with as much life and power as ever. The *preservation* of this religion amidst so much and so varied opposition, proves that it is of God. No severer trial *can* await it than it has already experienced; and as it has survived so many storms and trials, we have every evidence that according to the predictions, it is destined to live, and to fill the world. See Note, Matt. xvi. 18. Isa. liv. 17; lv. 11. Dan. iv. 25. ¶ *Lest.* That is, if you continue to oppose it, you may be found to have been opposing God. ¶ *Haply.* Perhaps. In the Greek this is *lest* at any time, that is, at some future time, when too late to retract your doings, &c. ¶ *Ye be found.* It shall appear that you have been opposing God. ¶ *Even to fight against God.* Greek, ἐναντίας. The word occurs no-

where else in the New Testament. To fight against God is to oppose him, or to maintain an attitude of hostility against him. It is an attitude that is most fearful in its character, and will most certainly be attended with an overthrow. No condition can be more awful than such an opposition to the Almighty; no overthrow more terrible than that which must follow such opposition. Comp. Acts ix. 5; xxiii. 9. Opposition to the *gospel* in the Scriptures is uniformly regarded as opposition to God. Matt. xii. 30. Luke xi. 23. Men may be said to *fight against God* in the following ways, or on the following subjects. (1.) When they oppose his *gospel*, its preaching, its plans, its influence among men; when they endeavour to prevent its spread, or to withdraw their families and friends from its influence. (2.) When they oppose the *doctrines* of the Bible. When they become angry that the real truths of religion are preached; and suffer themselves to be irritated and excited, by an *unwillingness* that those doctrines should be true, and should be presented to men. Yet this is no uncommon thing. Men by nature do not love those doctrines, and they are often indignant that they are preached. Some of the most angry feelings which men ever have, arise from this source; and man can never find peace until he is *willing* that God's truth should exert its influence on his own soul, and rejoice that it is believed and loved by others. (3.) Men oppose the *law* of God. It seems to them too stern and harsh. It condemns them; and they are unwilling that it should be applied to them. There is nothing which a sinner likes *less* than he does the pure and holy law of God. (4.) Sinners fight against the *providence* of God. When he afflicts them, they rebel. When he takes away their health, or property, or friends, they murmur. They esteem him harsh and cruel; and instead of finding peace by *submission*, they greatly aggravate their sufferings, and infuse a mixture of wormwood and gall into the cup, by murmuring and repining. There is no peace in affliction but in the feeling that God is *right*. And until this belief is cherished, the wicked will be like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. Isa. lvii. 20. Such opposition to God is as wicked as it is foolish.

40 And to him they agreed : and when they had called the apostles, and beaten ^a *them*, they commanded

^a Matt. 10. 17.

The Lord gave, and has a right to remove our comforts; and we should be still, and know that he is God. (5.) Sinners fight against God when they resist the influences of his Spirit; when they *oppose* serious thoughts; when they seek evil, or gay companions and pleasures rather than submit to God; and when they resist all the entreaties of their friends to become Christians. All these may be the appeals which God is making to men to be prepared to meet him. And yet it is common for sinners thus to stifle conviction, and refuse even to think of their eternal welfare. Nothing can be an act of more *direct* and deliberate wickedness and folly than this. Without the aid of the Holy Spirit none can be saved; and to resist his influences is to put away the only prospect of eternal life. To do it, is to do it over the grave; not knowing that another hour or day may be granted; and not knowing that *if* life is prolonged, the Spirit will ever strive again with the heart.

In view of this verse we may remark, 1. That the path of wisdom is to submit at once to all the requirements of God. Without this, we must expect conflicts with him, and perils and ruin. No man can be *opposed* to God, without endangering himself every minute. 2. Submission to God should be entire. It should extend to every doctrine, and demand; every law, and every act of the Almighty. In all his requirements, and in all afflictions, we should submit to him, and thus only shall we find peace. 3. Infidels and scoffers will gain nothing by opposing God. They have thus far been thwarted, and unsuccessful; and they will be still. None of their plans have succeeded; and the hope of destroying the Christian religion, after the efforts of almost two thousand years, must be vain, and will recoil with tremendous vengeance on those who make them.

40. And to him they agreed. Greek, They were persuaded by him; or they trusted to him. They agreed only so far as their design of putting them to death was concerned. They abandoned *that* design. But they did not comply with his advice to let them entirely alone. ¶ And beaten them. The usual amount of *lashes* which were inflicted on offenders was thirty-nine. 2 Cor. xi. 24. *Beat-*

^b that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

41 And they departed from the

^b c. 4. 18.

ing, or *whipping*, was a common mode of punishing minor offences among the Jews. It was expressly foretold by the Saviour that the apostles would be subjected to this. Matt. x. 17. The reason why they did not adopt the advice of Gamaliel altogether, doubtless was, that if they did, they feared that their *authority* would be despised by the people. They had commanded them not to preach, they had threatened them (ch. iv. 18; v. 28); they had imprisoned them (ch. v. 18); and now if they suffered them to go without even the *appearance* of punishment, their authority, they feared, would be despised by the nation; and it would be supposed that the apostles had triumphed over the sanhedrim. It is probable also that they were so indignant, that they could not suffer them to go without the gratification of subjecting them to the public odium of a *whipping*. Men, if they cannot accomplish their *full* purposes of malignity against the gospel, will take up with even some petty annoyance and malignity, rather than let it alone.

41. *Rejoicing*. Nothing to most men would seem more disgraceful than a public whipping. It is a punishment inflicted usually not so much because it gives *pain*, as because it is esteemed to be attended with disgrace. The Jewish rulers doubtless desired that the apostles might be so affected with the sense of this disgrace as to be unwilling to appear again in public, or to preach the gospel any more. Yet in this they were disappointed. The effect was just the reverse. If it be asked *why* they *rejoiced* in this manner, we may reply, (1.) Because they were permitted thus to *imitate* the example of the Lord Jesus. He had been scourged and reviled, and they were glad that they were permitted to be treated as he was. Comp. Phil. iii. 10. Col. i. 24. 1 Pet. iv. 13. "Rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings." (2.) Because, by this, they had evidence that they were the friends and followers of Christ. It was clear they were engaged in the same cause that he was; enduring the same sufferings; and striving to advance the same interests. As they loved the *cause*, therefore they would rejoice in enduring even the shame and sufferings which the cause, of necessity, involved. The kingdom of the Redeemer was an object so

presence of the council, rejoicing ^a that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

42 And daily ^b in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

^a Matt. 5. 12. 2 Cor. 12. 10. Ph. 1. 29. Ja. 1. 2 1 Pet. 4. 13-16.

transcendantly important, that *for* it, they were willing to endure *all* the afflictions and disgrace which it might involve. (3.) They had been told to *expect* this; it was a part of their enterprise. They had been warned of these things, and they now rejoiced that they had *this* evidence that they were engaged in the cause of truth. Matt. v. 11, 12; x. 2 Cor. xii. 10. Phil. i. 29. James i. 2. (4.) Religion appears to a Christian so excellent and lovely, that he is willing, for its sake, to endure trial, and persecution and death. With *all* this, it is infinite gain; and we should be willing to endure these trials, if, by them, we may gain a crown of glory. Comp. Mark x. 30. (5.) Christians are the professed friends of Christ. We show attachment for friends, by being willing to suffer for them; to bear contempt and reproach on their account; and to share *their* persecutions, sorrows, and calamities. (6.) The apostles were engaged in a cause of innocence, truth, and benevolence. They had *done* nothing of which to be ashamed; and they rejoiced, therefore, in a conscience void of offence; and in the consciousness of integrity and benevolence. When other men *disgrace themselves* by harsh, or vile, or opprobrious language, or conduct towards us, we should not feel that the disgrace belongs to us. It is *theirs*; and we should not be ashamed or distressed, though their rage should fall on us. See 1 Pet. iv. 14-16. ¶ *Counted worthy*. Esteemed to be deserving. That is esteemed *fit* for it *by the sanhedrim*. It does not mean that God esteemed them worthy, but that the Jewish council judged them fit to suffer shame in this cause. They evinced so much zeal, and determination of purpose, that they were judged fit objects to be treated as the Lord Jesus had himself been. ¶ *To suffer shame*. To be *dishonoured* or *disgraced* in the estimation of the Jewish rulers. The *particular* disgrace to which reference is made here was *whipping*. To various other kinds of shame they were also exposed. They were persecuted, reviled, and finally put to death.—Here we may remark, that a profession of the Christian religion has been in all ages esteemed by many to be a *disgrace*.

CHAPTER VI.

AND in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians ^c against the Hebrews, because their widows

^b 2 Tim. 4. 2.

^c c. 9. 29; 11. 20.

The *reasons* are, (1.) That Jesus is himself despised; (2.) That his precepts are opposed to the gayety and follies of the world; (3.) That it attacks that on which the men of the world pride themselves, rank, wealth, fashion; (4.) That it requires a *spirit* which the world esteems mean and grovelling—meekness, humility, self-denial, patience, forgiveness of injuries; and (5.) That it requires *duties*—prayer, praise, seriousness, benevolence—which the men of the world despise. All these things the world esteem degrading and mean; and hence they endeavour to subject those who practise them to disgrace.—The *kind* of disgrace to which Christians have been subjected are too numerous to be mentioned here. In former times they were subjected to the loss of property, of reputation, and to all the shame of public punishment, and to the terrors of the dungeon, the stake, or the rack. One main design of persecution was, to select a kind of punishment so *disgraceful* as to deter others from professing religion. Disgrace even yet may attend it. It may subject one to the ridicule of friends—of even a father, mother, or brother. Christians hear their opinions abused; their names vilified; their Bible travestied; the name of their God profaned, and of their Redeemer blasphemed. Their feelings are often wantonly and rudely torn by the cutting sarcasm, or the bitter sneer. Books and songs revile them; their peculiarities are made the occasion of indecent merriment on the stage and in novels; and in this way they are still subjected to shame for the name of Jesus. Every one who becomes a Christian should remember that this is a part of his inheritance, and should not esteem it dishonourable to be treated as his master was before him. John xv. 18-20. Matt. x. 25. ¶ *For his name*. For attachment to him.

42. And daily, &c. Comp. 2 Tim. iv. 2. Notes, Acts ii. 46.

CHAPTER VI.

1. In those days, &c. The first part of this chapter contains an account of the appointment of *deacons*. It may be asked, perhaps, why the apostles did not appoint

were neglected in "the daily ministration."

a c. 4. 35.

these officers at the first organization of the church? To this question we may reply, that it was better to defer the appointment until an occasion should occur when it should appear to be manifestly necessary and proper. When the church was small, its alms could be distributed by the apostles themselves without difficulty. But when it was greatly increased; when its charities would be multiplied; and when the distribution might give rise to contentions, it was necessary that this matter should be intrusted to the hands of *laymen*, and that the *ministry* should be freed from all embarrassment, and all suspicions of dishonesty and unfairness in regard to pecuniary matters. It has never been found to be wise that the temporal affairs of the church should be intrusted in any considerable degree to the clergy; and they should be freed from such sources of difficulty and embarrassment. ¶ *Was multiplied.* By the accession of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, and of those who were subsequently added. ch. iv. 4; v. 14. ¶ *A murmuring.* A *complaint*—as, if there had been partiality in the distribution. ¶ *Of the Grecians.* There has been much diversity of opinion in regard to these persons, whether they were *Jews* that had lived among the Gentiles, and who spoke the Greek language, or whether they were proselytes from the Gentiles. The former is probably the correct opinion. The word here used is not that which is usually employed to designate the inhabitants of Greece, but it properly denotes those who *imitate* the customs and habits of the Greeks, who use the Greek language, &c. In the time when the gospel was first preached, there were two classes of Jews—those who remained in Palestine, who used the Hebrew language, &c. and who were appropriately called *Hebrews*; and those who were scattered among the Gentiles, who spoke the Greek language, and who used in their synagogues the Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint. These were called *Hellenists*, or as it is in our translation *Grecians*. Note, John vii. 35. These were doubtless the persons mentioned here—not those who were proselyted from Gentiles, but those who were not natives of Judea, who had come up to Jerusalem to attend the great festivals of the Jews. See ch. ii. 5. 9—11. Dissensions would be very likely to arise

2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto*

between these two classes of persons. The Jews of Palestine would pride themselves much on the fact that they dwelt in the land of the patriarchs, and the land of promise; that they used the language which their fathers spoke, and in which the oracles of God were given; and that they were constantly near the temple, and regularly engaged in its solemnities. On the other hand, the Jews from other parts of the world would be suspicious, jealous, and envious of their brethren, and would be likely to charge them with partiality, or of taking advantage in their intercourse with them. These occasions of strife would not be destroyed by their conversion to Christianity, and one of them is furnished on this occasion. ¶ *Because their widows, &c.* The property which had been contributed, or thrown into common stock, was understood to be designed for the equal benefit of *all* the poor, and particularly it would seem for the poor widows. The distribution before this, seems to have been made by the apostles themselves—or possibly, as Mosheim conjectures (*Comm. de rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum*, p. 139. 118), the apostles committed the distribution of these funds to the Hebrews, and hence the Grecians are represented as murmuring against them, and not against the apostles. ¶ *In the daily ministration.* In the daily distribution which was made for their wants. Comp. ch. iv. 35. The property was contributed doubtless with an understanding that it should be *equally* and justly distributed to all classes of Christians that had need.—It is clear from the Epistles that *widows* were objects of special attention in the primitive church, and that the first Christians regarded it as a matter of indispensable obligation to provide for their wants. 1 Tim. v. 3. 9, 10. 16. James i. 27.

2. *Then the twelve.* That is, the apostles. Matthias had been added to them after the apostacy of Judas, which had completed the original number. ¶ *The multitude of the disciples.* It is not necessary to suppose that *all* the disciples were convened, which amounted to many thousands, but that the business was laid before a large number; or perhaps the *multitude* here, means those merely who were more particularly interested in the matter, and who had been engaged in the complaint. ¶ *It is not reason.* The original words used here properly de-

them, and said, It ^a is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

3 Wherefore, brethren, look ^b ye

^a Ex. 18. 17-26.

^b De. 1. 13.

note it is not *pleasing*, or *agreeable*; but the meaning evidently is, it is not *fit*, or *proper*. It would be a departure from the design of their appointment, which was to preach the gospel, and not to attend to the pecuniary affairs of the church. ¶ *Leave the word of God*. That we should neglect, or abandon the preaching of the gospel so much as would be necessary, if we attended personally to the distribution of the alms of the church.—The *gospel* is here called the *word of God*, because it is *his* message; it is that which he has *spoken*; or which he has commanded to be proclaimed to men. ¶ *Serve tables*. This expression properly denotes to take care of, or to provide for the table, or for the daily wants of the family. It is an expression that properly applies to a steward, or a servant. The word *tables* is however sometimes used with reference to *money*, as being the place where money was kept for the purpose of *exchange*, &c. Matt. xxi. 12; xxv. 27. Here the expression means, therefore, to attend to the pecuniary transactions of the church, and to make the proper distribution for the wants of the poor.

3. *Look ye out*. Select, or choose. As this was a matter pertaining to their own pecuniary affairs, it was proper that *they* should be permitted to choose such men as they could confide in. By this means the apostles would be free from all suspicions. It could not be pretended that *they* were partial, nor could it ever be charged on them that they wished to embezzle a part of the funds by managing them themselves, or by intrusting them to men of their own selection.—It follows from this also that the right of selecting *deacons* resides in the church, and does not pertain to the ministry. And it is evidently proper that men who are to be intrusted with the alms of the church should be selected by the church itself. ¶ *Among you*. That is, from among the Grecians and Hebrews, that there may be justice done, and no further cause of complaint. ¶ *Seven men*. Seven was a sacred number among the Hebrews, but there does not appear to have been any *mystery* in choosing this number. It was a convenient number, sufficiently numerous to secure the faithful performance of the duty, and not so nu-

merous as to produce confusion and embarrassment. It does not follow, however, that the same number is now to be chosen as deacons in a church, for the precise number is not commanded. ¶ *Of honest report*. Of fair reputation; regarded as men of integrity. Greek, *testified of*, or *borne witness to*, i. e. whose characters were well known and fair. ¶ *Full of the Holy Ghost*. This evidently does not mean endowed with miraculous gifts, or the power of speaking foreign languages, for such gifts were not necessary to the discharge of their office, but it means men who were eminently under the influence of the Holy Ghost, or who were of distinguished piety. This was all that was necessary in the case, and this is all that the words fairly imply in this place. ¶ *And wisdom*. Prudence, or skill, to make a wise and equable distribution. The qualifications of deacons are still further stated and illustrated in 1 Tim. iii. 8-10. In this place it is seen that they must be men of eminent piety and fair character, and that they must possess *prudence*, or *wisdom*, to manage the affairs connected with their office.

These qualifications are indispensable to a faithful discharge of the duty intrusted to the officers of the church. ¶ *Whom we may appoint*. Whom we may constitute, or set over this business. The way in which this was done was, by prayer and the imposition of hands. ver. 6. Though they were *selected* by the church, yet the power of ordaining them, or setting them apart, was retained by the apostles. Thus the rights of *both* were preserved, the right of the church to designate those who should serve them in the office of deacon, and the right of the apostles to organize and establish the church with its appropriate officers; on the one hand, a due regard to the liberty and privileges of the Christian community, and on the other the security of proper respect for the office, as being of apostolic appointment and authority. ¶ *Over this business*. That is, over the distribution of the alms of the church—not to preach, or to govern the church, but solely to take care of the sacred funds of charity, and distribute them to supply the wants of the poor. The office is distinguished from that of *preaching* the gospel. To that

c. 16. 2. 1 Tim. 3. 7, 8, 10.

4 But we will ^a give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose

a 1 Tim. 4. 15.

the apostles were to attend. The deacons were expressly set apart to a different work, and to that work they should be confined. In this account of their original appointment, there is not the slightest intimation that they were to *preach*, but the contrary is supposed in the whole transaction. Nor is there here the slightest intimation that they were regarded as an order of *clergy*, or as in any way connected with the clerical office.—In the ancient synagogues of the Jews there were three men to whom was intrusted the care of the poor. They were called by the Hebrews *Parnasin* or *Pastors*. (Lightfoot, Horæ Heb. et Talm. Matt. iv. 23.) From these officers the apostles took the idea probably of appointing deacons in the Christian church, and doubtless intended that their duties should be the same.

4. But we will give ourselves continually. The original expression here used denotes *intense* and *persevering* application to a thing, or unwearied effort in it. See Note, Acts i. 14. It means that the apostles meant to make this their constant and main object, undistracted by the cares of life, and even by attention to the temporal wants of the church. ¶ *To prayer*. Whether this means *private* or *public* prayer cannot be certainly determined. The passage, however, would rather incline us to suppose that the *latter* was meant, as it is immediately connected with preaching. If so, then the phrase denotes that they would give themselves to the duties of their office, one part of which was public prayer, and another preaching. Still it is to be believed that the apostles felt the need of secret prayer, and practised it, as preparatory to their public preaching. ¶ *And to the ministry of the word*. To preaching the gospel; or communicating the message of eternal life to the world. The word *ministry* (δουκονία) properly denotes the employment of a *servant*, and is given to the preachers of the gospel because they are employed in this *service* as the servants of God, and of the church.—We have here a view of what the apostles thought to be the proper work of the ministry. They were set apart to this work. It was their main, their only employment. To

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Stephen, a man full ^b of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, ^c and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and ^d Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:

b c. 11. 24.

c c. 8. 5, 26; 21. 8.

d Re. 2. 6, 15.

to this their lives were to be devoted, and both by their example and their writings they have shown that it was on this principle they acted. Comp. 1 Tim. iv. 15, 16. 2 Tim. iv. 2. It follows also that if their time and talents were to be wholly devoted to this work, it was reasonable that they should receive competent support from the churches, and this reasonable claim is often urged by the apostle. See 1 Cor. ix. 7—14. Gal. vi. 6.

5. And the saying. The word—the counsel, or command. ¶ *And they chose Stephen, &c.* A man who soon showed (ch. vii.) that he was every way qualified for his office, and fitted to defend also the cause of the Lord Jesus. This man had the distinguished honour of being the first Christian martyr. ch. vii. ¶ *And Nicolas*. From this man some of the Fathers (Ire. lib. i. 27. Epipha. 1. Heres. 5.) say, that the sect of the *Nicolaitanes*, mentioned with so much disapprobation (Rev. ii. 6. 15), took their rise. But the evidence of this is not clear. ¶ *A proselyte*. A *proselyte* is one who is converted from one religion to another. See Note, Matt. xxiii. 15. The word does not mean here that he was a convert to *Christianity*—which was true—but that he had been converted at Antioch from paganism to the Jewish religion. As this is the only proselyte mentioned among the seven deacons, it is evident that the others were native-born Jews, though a part of them might have been born out of Palestine, and have been of the denomination of *Grecians*, or *Hellenists*. ¶ *Of Antioch*. This city, often mentioned in the New Testament (Acts xi. 19. 20. 26; xv. 22. 35. Gal. ii. 11, &c.); was situated in Syria on the river Orontes, and was formerly called *Riblath*. It is not mentioned in the Old Testament, but is frequently mentioned in the Apocrypha. It was built by Seleucus Nicanor, A. C. 301, and was named *Antioch*, in honour of his father Antiochus. It became the seat of empire of the Syrian kings of the Macedonian race, and afterwards of the Roman governors of the eastern provinces. In this place the disciples of Christ were first called *Christians*. Acts xi. 26. Josephus says it was the third city in size of the Roman

6 Whom they set before the apostles : and when ^a they had prayed, they ^b laid *their* hands on them.

7 And ^c the word of God increased ; and the number of the disciples

^a c. 1. 24. ^b c. 9. 17; 13. 3. 1 Tim. 4. 14; 5. 22. 2 Tim. 1. 6.

provinces, being inferior only to Seleucia and Alexandria. It was long, indeed, the most powerful city of the East. The city was almost square, had many gates, was adorned with fine fountains, and possessed great fertility of soil and commercial opulence. It was subject to earthquakes, and was often almost destroyed by them. In A. D. 588 above sixty thousand persons perished in it in this manner. In A. D. 970 an army of one hundred thousand Saracens besieged it, and took it. In 1268 it was taken possession of by the Sultan of Egypt, who demolished it, and placed it under the dominion of the Turk. It is now called *Antakia*, and till the year 1822 it occupied a remote corner of the ancient enclosure of its walls, its splendid buildings being reduced to hovels, and its population living in Turkish debasement. It contains now about ten thousand inhabitants. (*Robinson's Calmet*.) This city should be distinguished from Antioch in Pisidia, also mentioned in the New Testament. Acts xiii. 14.

6. And when they had prayed. Invoking in this manner the blessing of God on them to attend them in the discharge of the duties of their office. ¶ *They laid their hands*, &c. Among the Jews it was customary to lay hands on the head of a person who was set apart to any particular office. Num. xxvii. 18. Comp. Acts viii. 19. In this case done, not to impart any power or ability, but to *designate* that they received their authority, or commission, from those who thus laid their hands on them, as the act of laying hands on the sick by the Saviour was an act signifying that the power of healing came from him. Matt. ix. 18. Comp. Mark xvi. 18. In this case the laying on of the hands conveyed of itself no healing power, but was a sign or token that the power came from the Lord Jesus. Ordination has been uniformly performed in this way. See 1 Tim. v. 22. Though the seven deacons had been chosen by the church to this work, yet they derived their immediate commission and authority from the apostles.

7. And the word of God increased. That is, the gospel was more and more

multiplied in Jerusalem greatly ; and a great company of the priests ^d were obedient to the faith.

8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

^c 1s. 55. 11. ^c 12. 24; 19. 20. ^d Ps. 132. 9, 16. Jno. 12. 42.

successful, or became more mighty, and extensive in its influence. An instance of this success is immediately added. ¶ *And a great company of the priests. A great multitude.* This is recorded justly as a remarkable instance of the power of the gospel. How great this *company* was is not mentioned. But the number of the priests in Jerusalem was very great ; and their conversion was a striking proof of the power of truth. It is probable that they had been opposed to the gospel with quite as much hostility as any other class of the Jews. And it is now mentioned, as worthy of special record, that the gospel was sufficiently mighty to humble even the proud, and haughty, and selfish, and envious priest to the foot of the cross. One design of the gospel, is to evince the power of truth in subduing all classes of men ; and hence in the New Testament we have the record of its having actually subdued every class to the obedience of faith. Some MSS. however here instead of *priests* read *Jews*. And this reading is followed in the Syriac version. ¶ *Were obedient to the faith.* The word *faith* here is evidently put for the *Christian religion*. Faith is one of the main requirements of the gospel (Mark xvi. 16), and by a figure of speech is put for the gospel itself. To become *obedient to the faith*, therefore, is to obey the requirements of the gospel, particularly that which requires us to *believe*. Comp. Rom. x. 16. By the accession of the *priests* also no small part of the reproach would be taken away from the gospel, that it made converts only among the lower classes of the people. Comp. John vii. 48.

8. And Stephen. The remarkable death of this first Christian martyr, which soon occurred, gave occasion to the sacred writer to give a detailed account of his character, and of the causes which led to his death. Hitherto the opposition of the Jews had been confined to threats and imprisonment ; but it was now to burst forth with furious rage and madness, that could be satisfied only with blood. This was the first in a series of persecutions against Christians that filled the church with blood, and that closed the lives of

9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *The synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cy-

thousands, perhaps millions in the great work of establishing the gospel on the earth. ¶ *Full of faith.* Full of confidence in God; or trusting entirely to his promises. See Note, Mark xvi. 16. ¶ *And power.* The power which was evinced in working miracles. ¶ *Wonders.* This is one of the words commonly used in the New Testament to denote miracles.

9. *Then there arose.* That is, they stood up against him; or they opposed him. ¶ *Of the synagogue.* See Note, Matt. iv. 23. The Jews were scattered in all parts of the world. In every place they would have synagogues. But it is also probable that there would be enough foreign Jews residing at Jerusalem from each of those places to maintain the worship of the synagogue; and at the great feasts those synagogues adapted to Jewish people of different nations, would be attended by those who came up to attend the great feasts. It is certain that there was a large number of synagogues at Jerusalem. The common estimate is, that there were four hundred and eighty in the city. (*Light-foot, Vitringa.*) ¶ *Of the Libertines.* There has been very great difference of opinion about the meaning of this word. The chief opinions may be reduced to three. 1. The word is Latin, and means properly a *freedman*, a man who had been a slave and was set at liberty. And many have supposed that these persons were manumitted slaves, of Roman origin, but which had become proselyted to the Jewish religion, and who had a synagogue in Jerusalem. This opinion is not very probable; though it is certain, from *Tacitus* (*Annal. lib. ii. c. 85*), that there were many persons of this description at Rome. He says that four thousand Jewish proselytes of Roman slaves made free were sent at one time to Sardinia. 2. A second opinion is, that these persons were Jews by birth, and had been taken captives by the Romans, and then set at liberty, and thus called *freedmen*, or *libertines*. That there were many Jews of this description there can be no doubt. Pompey the Great, when he subjugated Judea, sent large numbers of the Jews to Rome. (*Philo, in Legat. ad Caium.*) These Jews were set at liberty at Rome, and assigned a place beyond the Tiber for a residence. See Introduction to the Epistle to the Romans. These persons are by *Philo* called *libertines*, or *freedmen*. (*Kuinöl in loco.*)

renians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

Many Jews were also conveyed as captives by Ptolemy I. to Egypt, and obtained a residence in that country and the vicinity. But 3. Another, and more probable opinion is, that they took their name from some place which they occupied. This opinion is more probable from the fact that all the other persons mentioned here are named from the countries which they occupied. Suidas says that this is the name of a place. And in one of the Fathers this passage occurs: "Victor, bishop of the Catholic church at *Libertina*, says, unity is there," &c. From this passage it is plain that there was a place called *Libertina*. That place was in Africa, not far from ancient Carthage. See Bishop *Pearce's* Comment. on this place. ¶ *Cyrenians.* Jews who dwelt at *Cyrene* in Africa. See Note, Matt. xxvii. 32. ¶ *Alexandrians.* Inhabitants of Alexandria in Egypt. It was founded by Alexander the Great, B. C. 332, and was peopled by colonies of Greeks and Jews. This city was much celebrated, and contained not less than three hundred thousand free citizens, and as many slaves. The city was the residence of many Jews. Josephus says that Alexander himself assigned to them a particular quarter of the city, and allowed them equal privileges with the Greeks. (*Antiq. xiv. 7. 2.* Against Apion, ii. 4.) Philo affirms that of five parts of the city, the Jews inhabited two. According to his statement, there dwelt in his time at Alexandria and the other Egyptian cities, not less than *ten hundred thousand Jews*. Amron, the general of Omar, when he took the city, said that it contained forty thousand tributary Jews. At this place the famous version of the Old Testament called the *Septuagint*, or the Alexandrian version, was made. See Robinson's Calmet. ¶ *Cilicia.* This was a province of Asia Minor, on the sea-coast, at the north of Cyprus. The capital of this province was Tarsus, the native place of Paul. ch. ix. 11. And as Paul was of this place, and belonged doubtless to this synagogue, it is probable that he was one who was engaged in this dispute with Stephen. Comp. ch. vii. 58. ¶ *Of Asia.* See Note, ch. ii. 9. ¶ *Disputing with Stephen.* Doubtless on the question whether Jesus was the Messiah. This word does not denote *angry disputing*, but is commonly used to denote fair and impartial inquiry; and it is probable that

10 And they were not able ^a to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

11 Then they suborned ^b men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.

12 And they stirred up the peo-

a Lu.21,15.

b 1Ki.21,10,13. Matt.26,59,60.

the discussion began in this way; and when they were overcome by *argument*, they resorted, as disputants are apt to do, to angry criminations and violence.

10. *To resist.* That is, they were not able to answer his arguments. ¶ *The wisdom.* This properly refers to his knowledge of the Scriptures; his skill in what the Jews esteemed to be wisdom—acquaintance with their sacred writings, opinions, &c. ¶ *And the spirit.* This has been commonly understood of the Holy Spirit, by which he was aided; but it rather means the *energy, power, or ardour* of Stephen. He evinced a spirit of zeal and sincerity which they could not withstand; which served, more than mere argument could have done, to convince them that he was right.—The evidence of sincerity, honesty, and zeal in a public speaker will often go farther to convince the great mass of mankind, than the most able argument if delivered in a cold and indifferent manner.

11. *Then they suborned men.* To suborn in law means to procure a person to take such a false oath as constitutes perjury. (Webster.) It has substantially this sense here. It means that they induced them to declare that which was false, or to bring a false accusation against him. This was done not by declaring a palpable and open falsehood, but by *perverting* his doctrines, and by stating their own *inferences* as what he had actually maintained—the common way in which men oppose doctrines from which they differ. The Syriac reads this place, “Then they sent certain men, and instructed them that they should say,” &c. This was repeating an artifice which they practised so successfully in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. See Matt. xxvi. 60, 61. ¶ *We have heard, &c.* When they alleged that they had heard this, is not said. Probably, however, in some of his discourses with the people, when he wrought miracles and wonders among them. ver. 8. ¶ *Blasphemous words.* See Note, Matt. ix. 3. Moses was regarded with profound reverence. His laws they regarded as

ple, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon *him*, and caught him, and brought *him* to the council,

13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law :

unchangeable. Any intimation, therefore, that there was a greater lawgiver than he, or that his institutions were mere shadows and types, and were no longer binding, would be regarded as blasphemy, even though it should be spoken with the highest respect for Moses. That the Mosaic institutions were to be changed, and give place to another and better dispensation, all the Christian teachers would affirm; but this was not said with a design to *blaspheme* or revile Moses. *In the view of the Jews*, to say that, was to speak blasphemy; and hence, instead of reporting what he actually *did* say, they accused him of *saying* what they regarded as blasphemy.—If reports are made of what men say, their very *words* should be reported; and we should not report *our* inferences or *impressions* as what they actually said. ¶ *And against God.* God was justly regarded by the Jews as the Giver of their law, and the Author of their institutions. But the Jews, either wilfully or involuntarily, not knowing that they were a shadow of good things to come, and were therefore to pass away, regarded all intimations of such a change as blasphemy against God. God had a right to change or abolish those ceremonial observances; and it was *not* blasphemy in Stephen to declare it.

12. *And they stirred up the people.* They excited the people, or alarmed their fears, as had been done before when they sought to put the Lord Jesus to death. Matt. xxvii. 20. ¶ *The elders.* The members of the sanhedrim, or great council. ¶ *Scribes.* Note, Matt. ii. 4. ¶ *To the council.* To the sanhedrim, or the great council of the nation, which claimed jurisdiction in the matters of religion. See Note, Matt. ii. 4.

13. *And set up false witnesses.* It has been made a question why these persons are called *false* witnesses, since it is supposed by many that they reported merely the *words* of Stephen. It may be replied that *if* they did report merely his *words*, if Stephen had actually said what they affirmed, yet they perverted his meaning.

14 For^a we have heard him say, 'That this Jesus of Nazareth shall^b destroy this place, and shall change the^c customs which Moses delivered us.

They accused him of *blasphemy*, that is, of calumnious and reproachful words against Moses, and against God. That Stephen had spoken in such a manner, or had designed to *reproach* Moses, there is no evidence. What was said in the mildest manner, and in the way of cool argument, might easily be perverted so as in *their view* to amount to blasphemy. But there is no evidence whatever that Stephen had ever *used* these words on any occasion. And it is altogether improbable that he ever did, for the following reasons: (1.) Jesus *himself* never affirmed that *he* would destroy that place. He uniformly taught that it would be done by the *Gentiles*. Matt. xxiv. It is altogether improbable, therefore, that Stephen should declare any such thing. (2.) It is equally improbable that he taught that Jesus would abolish the peculiar customs and rites of the Jews. It was long, and after much discussion, before the apostles themselves were convinced of it; and when those customs were changed, it was done gradually. See Acts x. 14, &c. xi. 2, &c. xv. 20; xxi. 20, &c. The probability therefore is, that the whole testimony was *false*, and was artfully invented to produce the utmost exasperation among the people, and yet was at the same time so plausible as to be easily believed. For on this point the Jews were particularly sensitive; and it is clear that they had some expectations that the Messiah *would* produce some such changes, Comp. Matt. xxvi. 61 with Dan. ix. 26, 27. The same charge was afterwards brought against Paul, which he promptly denied. See Acts xxv. 8. ¶ *This holy place.* The temple. ¶ *The law.* The law of Moses.

14. *Shall change.* Shall abolish them; or shall introduce others in their place. ¶ *The customs.* The ceremonial rites and observances of sacrifices, festivals, &c. appointed by Moses.

15. *Looking steadfastly on him.* Fixing the eyes intently on him. Probably they were attracted by the unusual appearance of the man, his meekness, and calm and collected fearlessness, and the proofs of conscious innocence and sincerity. ¶ *The face of an angel.* This expression is one evidently denoting that he manifested

15 And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his^c face as it had been the face of an angel.

a c. 25. 8. b Dan. 9. 26. c or, rites. c Ex. 34. 30, 35.

evidence of sincerity, gravity, fearlessness, confidence in God. It is used in the Old Testament to denote peculiar wisdom. 2 Sam. xiv. 17; xix. 27. In Gen. xxxiii. 10, it is used to denote peculiar majesty and glory, as if it were the face of God. When Moses came down from mount Sinai from communing with God, it is said that the skin of his face shone, so that the children of Israel were afraid to come nigh to him. Ex. xxxiv. 29, 30. 2 Cor. iii. 7. 13. Comp. Rev. i. 16. Matt. xvii. 2. The expression is used to denote the impression which will be produced on the countenance by communion with God; the calm serenity and composure which will follow a confident committing of all into his hands. It is not meant that there was any thing *miraculous* in the case of Stephen, but is an expression denoting his calmness, and dignity, and confidence in God; all of which were so marked on his countenance, that it impressed them with clear proofs of his innocence and piety. The expression is very common in the Jewish writings. It is common for deep feeling, sincerity, and confidence in God, to impress themselves on the countenance. Any deep emotion will do this; and it is to be expected that religious feeling, the most tender and solemn of all feeling, will diffuse seriousness, serenity, calmness, and peace, not affected sanctimoniousness, over the countenance.

In this chapter we have another specimen of the manner in which the church of the Lord Jesus was reared on earth. It was from the beginning amid scenes of persecution; and encountering opposition adapted to try the nature and power of religion. If Christianity was an imposture, it had enemies acute and malignant enough to detect the imposition. The learned, the cunning, and the mighty rose up in opposition, and by all the arts of sophistry, all the force of authority, and all the fearfulness of power, attempted to destroy it in the commencement. Yet it lived; and it gained new accessions of strength from every new form of opposition; and only evinced its genuineness more and more by showing that it was superior to the arts and malice of earth and of hell.

CHAPTER VII.

THEN said the high-priest, Are these things so?

2 And he said, Men, ^a brethren,

a c.22.1.

CHAPTER VII.

THIS chapter contains the defence of Stephen before the sanhedrim, or great council of the Jews. There has been great diversity of opinion about the *object* which Stephen had in view in this defence, and about the reason why he introduced at such length the history of the Jewish people. But a few remarks may perhaps show his design. He was accused of *blasphemy in speaking against the institutions of Moses and the temple, that is, against every thing held sacred among the Jews*. To meet this charge, he gives a statement, at length, of his belief in the Mosaic religion, in the great points of their history, and in the fact that God had interposed in a remarkable manner in defending them from dangers. By this historical statement he avows his full belief in the divine origin of the Jewish religion, and thus *indirectly* repels the charge of blasphemy. It is further to be remembered, that this was the best way of securing the *attention* of the council. Had he entered on an abstract defence, he might expect to be stopped by their cavils or their clamour. But the history of their own nation was a favourite topic among the Jews. They were always ready to listen to an account of their ancestors; and to secure their attention, nothing more was necessary than to refer to their illustrious lives and deeds. Comp. Ps. lxxviii. cv. cvi. cxxxv. Ezek. xx. In this way Stephen secured their attention, and practically repelled the charge of speaking reproachfully of Moses and the temple. He showed them that *he* had as firm a belief as *they* in the great historical facts of their nation. It is to be remembered, also, that this speech was broken off in the midst (ver. 53, 54), and it is therefore difficult to tell what the design of Stephen was. It seems clear, however, that he intended to convict *them* of guilt, by showing that *they* sustained the same character as their fathers had manifested (ver. 51, 52); and there is some probability that he intended to show that the acceptable worship of God was not to be confined to any place particularly, from the fact that the worship of Abraham, and the patriarchs, and Moses, was acceptable *before* the temple was reared (ver. 2. &c.), and from the declaration in ver. 48, that

and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,

God dwells not in temples made with hands. All that can be said here is, that Stephen (1.) showed his full belief in the divine appointment of Moses, and the historical facts of their religion; (2.) That he laid the *foundation* of an argument to show that those things were not perpetually binding, and that acceptable worship *might* be offered in other places and in another manner than at the temple.

It has been asked in what way Luke became acquainted with this speech so as to repeat it. The Scripture has not informed us. But we may remark, (1.) That Stephen was the first martyr. His death, and the incidents connected with it, could not but be a matter of interest to the first Christians; and the *substance* of his defence, at least, would be familiar to them. There is no improbability in supposing that imperfect copies might be preserved by writing, and circulated among them. (2.) Luke was the companion of Paul. (See Introduction to the Gospel by Luke.) Paul was present when this defence was delivered, and was a man who would be likely to *remember* what was said on such an occasion. From him Luke might have derived the account of this defence. In regard to this discourse, it may be further remarked, that it is not necessary to suppose that *Stephen* was *inspired*. Even if there should be found inaccuracies, as some critics have pretended, in the address, it would not militate against its genuineness. It is the defence of a man on trial under a serious charge; not a man of whom there is evidence that he was *inspired*, but a pious, devoted, heavenly-minded man. All that the sacred narrative is responsible for is the *correctness of the report*. Luke alleges only that *such a speech was in fact delivered*, without affirming that every particular in it is correct.

1. *Then said the high-priest.* See Note, Matt. ii. 4. In this case the high-priest seems to have presided in the council. ¶ *Are these things so?* To wit, the charge alleged against him of blasphemy against Moses and the temple. ch. iv. 13, 14.

2. *Men, brethren, and fathers.* These were the usual titles by which the sanhedrim was addressed. In all this Stephen was perfectly respectful, and showed that he was disposed to render due

3 And said ^a unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy

^a Gen. 12.1.

honour to the institutions of the nation. ¶ *The God of glory.* This is a Hebrew form of expression denoting *the glorious God*. It properly denotes his majesty, or splendour, or magnificence; and the word *glory* is often applied to the splendid appearances in which God has manifested himself to men. Deut. v. 24. Ex. xxxiii. 18; xvi. 7. 10. Lev. ix. 23. Num. xiv. 10. Perhaps Stephen meant to affirm that God appeared to Abraham in some such glorious or splendid manifestation, by which he would know that he was addressed by God. Stephen, moreover, evidently uses the word *glory* to repel the charge of *blasphemy* against God, and to show that he regarded him as worthy of honour and praise. ¶ *Appeared, &c.* In what manner he appeared is not said. In Gen. xii. 1, it is simply recorded that God *had said* unto Abraham, &c. ¶ *To our father.* The Jews valued themselves much on being the children of Abraham. Note, Matt. iii. 9. This expression was therefore well calculated to conciliate their minds. ¶ *When he was in Mesopotamia.* In Gen. xi. 31, it is said that Abraham dwelt in *Ur of the Chaldees*. The word Mesopotamia properly denotes the region between the two rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris. Note, Acts ii. 9. The name is Greek, and the region had also other names before the Greek name was given to it. In Gen. xi. 31; xv. 7, it is called *Ur of the Chaldees*. Mesopotamia and Chaldaea might not exactly coincide; but it is evident that Stephen meant to say that *Ur* was in the country afterwards called Mesopotamia. Its precise situation is unknown. A Persian fortress of this name is mentioned by Ammianus (xxv. 8), between Nesibis and the Tigris. ¶ *Before he dwelt in Charran.* From Gen. xi. 31, it would seem that Terah took his son Abraham of his own accord, and removed to Haran. But from Gen. xii. 1; xv. 7, it appears that God had commanded Abraham to remove, and he so ordered it in his providence that Terah was disposed to remove his family with an intention of going into the land of Canaan.—*Charran.* This is the Greek form of the Hebrew word *Haran*. Gen. xi. 31. This place was also in Mesopotamia, in 36° 52' N. lat. and 39° 5' E. lon. Here Terah died (Gen. xi. 32); and to this place Jacob retired when he fled from his brother Esau. Gen. xxvii. 43. It is situated "in a flat and sandy plain, and is inhabited by a few wan-

dering Arabs, who select it for the delicious water which it contains." (*Robinson's Calmet.*)

3. And said unto him. How long this was said unto him before he went is not recorded. Moses simply says that God *had* commanded him to go. Gen. xii. 1. ¶ *Thy kindred.* Thy relatives, or family connexions. It seems that Terah went with him as far as to Haran; but Abraham was apprized that he was to leave his family, and to go almost alone. ¶ *Into the land, &c.* The country was yet unknown. The place was to be shown him. This is presented in the New Testament as a strong instance of faith. Heb. xi. 8, 9. It was an act of *simple confidence* in God. And to leave his country and home; to go into a land of strangers, not knowing whither he went, required strong confidence in God. It is a simple illustration of what man is always required to do, at the commands of God. Thus the gospel requires him to commit all to God; to yield body and soul to his disposal; and to be ready at his command to forsake father and mother, and friends, and houses, and lands, for the sake of the Lord Jesus. Luke xiv. 33. Matt. xix. 27, 29. The trials which Abraham might have anticipated may be readily conceived. He was going, in a rude and barbarous age of the world, into a land of strangers. He was without arms or armies, almost alone. He did not even know the nature or situation of the land, or the character of its inhabitants. He had no title to it; no claim to urge; and he went depending on the simple promise of God that he would give it to him. He went, therefore, trusting simply to the promise of God. And thus his conduct illustrated precisely what we are to do in all the future—in reference to all our coming life, and to the eternity before us—we are to trust simply to the promise of God, and *do* that which he requires. This is faith. In Abraham it was as simple and intelligible an operation of mind as ever occurs in any instance. Nor is faith in the Scripture regarded as more mysterious than any other mental operation. Had Abraham seen all that was to result from his going into that land, it would have been sufficient *reason* to induce him to do as he did. But God saw it; and Abraham was required to act just as if he had seen it all, and all the reasons why he was called. On the strength of

4 Then ^a came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.

a Gen. 12.5.

God's promises he was called to act. This was *faith*. It did not require him to act where there was *no reason* for his so acting, but where he did not *see* the reason. So in all cases of faith. If man could see all that God sees, he would *perceive* reasons for acting as God requires. But the reasons of things are often concealed, and man is required to act on the *belief* that God sees reasons why he should so act. To act under the proper impression of that truth which God presents, is faith; as simple and intelligible as any other act or operation of the mind. See Note, Mark xvi. 16.

4. *Land of the Chaldeans.* From Ur of the Chaldees. Gen. xii. 31. ¶ *When his father was dead.* This passage has given rise to no small difficulty in the interpretation. The difficulty is this: From Gen. xi. 26, it would seem that Abraham was born when Terah was seventy years of age. "And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran." From Gen. xii. 4, it seems that Abraham was seventy-five years of age when he departed from Haran to Canaan. The age of Terah was therefore but one hundred and forty-five years. Yet in Gen. xi. 32, it is said that Terah was two hundred and five years old when he died; thus leaving sixty years of Terah's life beyond the time when Abraham left Haran. Various modes have been proposed of meeting this difficulty. (1.) Errors in numbers are more likely to occur than any other. In the *Samartian* copy of the Pentateuch, it is said that Terah died in Haran at the age of one hundred and five years; which would suppose that his death occurred forty years before Abraham left Haran. But the Hebrew, Latin Vulgate, Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic read it two hundred and five years. (2.) It is not affirmed that Abraham was born just at the time when Terah was seventy years of age. All that the passage in Gen. xi. 26 proves, according to the usual meaning of similar expressions, is, that Terah was seventy years old *before* he had any sons, and that the three were born subsequently to that. But which was born first, or how long intervals intervened between their birth, does not appear.

5 And he gave him none inheritance in it, no not *so much as* to set his foot on: yet he promised ^b that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when *as yet* he had no child.

b Gen. 13.15.

Assuredly it does not mean that all were born precisely at the time when Terah was seventy years of age. Neither does it appear that Abraham was the oldest of the three. The sons of Noah are said to have been Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Gen. v. 32); yet Japheth, though mentioned last, was the eldest. (Gen. x. 21.) As Abraham afterwards became much the most distinguished, and as he was the father of the Jewish people, of whom Moses was writing, it was natural that he should be mentioned first. If it cannot be *proved* that Abraham was the eldest, as assuredly it cannot be, then there is no improbability in supposing that his birth might have occurred many years after Terah was seventy years of age. (3.) The Jews unanimously affirm that Terah relapsed into idolatry before Abraham left Haran; and this they denominate *death*, or a moral death. (*Kuinöel*.) It is certain, therefore, that, from some cause, they were accustomed to speak of Terah as *dead*, before Abraham left him. Stephen only used language which was customary among the Jews, and would use it, doubtless, correctly, though *we* may not be able to see precisely how it can be reconciled with the account in Genesis.

5. *And he gave him none inheritance.* Abraham led a wandering life. And this passage means, that he did not himself receive a permanent possession or residence in that land. The only land which he owned was the field which he *purchased* of the children of Heth, for a burial place. Gen. xxiii. As this was obtained by *purchase*, and not by the direct gift of God, and as it was not designed for a *residence*, it is said that God gave him *no inheritance*. It is mentioned as a strong instance of his faith, that he should remain there without a permanent residence himself, with only the prospect that his children, at some distant period, would inherit it. ¶ *Not so much as to set his foot on.* This is a proverbial expression, denoting in an emphatic manner that he had *no land*. Deut. ii. 5. ¶ *Would give it to him.* Gen. xiii. 15. Abraham did not himself possess all that land; and the promise is evidently equivalent to saying

6 And God spake on this wise, That ^a his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they

^a Gen. 15. 13, 16.

that it should be conferred on the family of Abraham, or the family of which he was the father, without affirming that *he* should himself personally possess it. It is true, however, that Abraham himself afterwards dwelt many years in that land as his home. Gen. xiii. &c. ¶ *For a possession.* To be held as his own property. ¶ *When as yet he had no child.* When there was no human probability that he would have any posterity. Comp. Gen. xv. 2, 3; xviii. 11, 12. This is mentioned as a strong instance of his faith; "who against hope believed in hope." Rom. iv. 18.

6. And God spake on this wise. In this manner. Gen. xv. 13, 14. ¶ *His seed.* His posterity; his descendants. ¶ *Should sojourn.* This means that they should have a temporary residence there. The word is used in opposition to a fixed, permanent home, and is applied to travellers, or foreigners. ¶ *In a strange land.* In the Hebrew (Gen. xv. 13), "Shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs." The land of Canaan and the land of Egypt were to them strange lands, though the obvious reference here is to the latter. ¶ *Should bring them into bondage.* Or, should make them slaves. Ex. i. 11. ¶ *And entreat them evil.* Should oppress or afflict them. ¶ *Four hundred years.* This is the precise time which is mentioned by Moses. Gen. xv. 13. Great perplexity has been experienced in explaining this passage, or reconciling it with other statements. In Ex. xii. 40, it is said that their sojourning in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. Josephus (Antiq. b. ii. ch. ix. § 1) also says that the time in which they were in Egypt was four hundred years; though in another place (Antiq. b. ii. ch. xv. § 2) he says that they left Egypt four hundred and thirty years after their forefather Abraham came to Canaan, but two hundred and fifteen years after Jacob removed to Egypt. Paul also (Gal. iii. 17) says that it was four hundred and thirty years from the time when the promise was given to Abraham to the time when the law was given on mount Sinai. The Samaritan Pentateuch says also (Ex. xii. 40) that the "dwelling of the sons of Israel, and of their fathers, which they dwelt in the land of Canaan, and in the land of Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years." The same

should bring them into bondage, and entreat *them* evil four ^b hundred years.

^b Ex. 12. 40, 41.

is the version of the Septuagint. A part of this perplexity is removed by the fact that Stephen and Moses use, in accordance with a very common custom, *round numbers* in speaking of it, and thus speak of four hundred years when the *literal* time was four hundred and thirty. The other perplexities are not so easily removed. From the account which Moses has given of the lives of certain persons, it would seem clear that the time which they spent in *Egypt* was *not* four hundred years. From Gen. xvi. 8, 11, it appears that *Kohath* was born when Jacob went into Egypt. He lived one hundred and thirty-three years. Ex. vi. 18. Amram, his son, and the father of Moses, lived one hundred and thirty-seven years. Ex. vi. 20. Moses was eighty years old when he was sent to Pharaoh. Ex. vii. 7. The *whole* time thus mentioned, including the time in which the father lived *after* his son was born, was only three hundred and fifty years. Exclusive of that, it is reasonable to suppose that the actual time of their being in Egypt could not have been but about two hundred years, according to one account of Josephus. The question then is, how can these accounts be reconciled? The only satisfactory way is by supposing that the four hundred and thirty years includes the whole time from the calling of Abraham to the departure from Egypt. And that this was the fact is probable from the following circumstances. (1.) The purpose of *all* the narratives on this subject is to trace the period *before* they became finally settled in the land of Canaan. During *all* this period from the calling of Abraham, they were in a wandering, unfixed situation. This constituted substantially *one* period, including *all* their oppressions, hardships, and dangers; and it was natural to have reference to this *entire* period in any account which was given. (2.) All this period was properly the period of *promise*, not of *possession*. In this respect the wanderings of Abraham and the oppressions of Egypt came under the same general description. (3.) Abraham was himself occasionally in Egypt. He was unsettled; and since Egypt was so *pre-eminent* in all their troubles, it was natural to speak of *all* their oppressions as having occurred in that country. The phrase "residence in Egypt," or "in a

7 And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve ^a me in this place.

8 And ^b he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so ^c

^a Ex.3.12.

^b Gen.17.9-11.

^c Gen.21.1-4.

Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day: and Isaac ^d begat Jacob; and Jacob ^e begat the twelve patriarchs,

9 And the patriarchs, moved with ^f envy, sold Joseph into Egypt; but ^g God was with him,

^d Gen.25.26.
Ps.105.17.

^e Gen.29.32,&c.
^g Gen.39.2,21.

^f Gen.37.28.

strange land," would come to be synonymous, and would denote *all* their oppressions and trials. They would speak of their sufferings as having been endured in Egypt, because their afflictions *there* were so much more prominent than before. (4.) All this receives countenance from the version of the LXX., and from the Samaritan text, showing the manner in which the ancient Jews were accustomed to understand it. (5.) It should be added, that difficulties of chronology are more likely to occur than any others; and it should not be deemed strange if there are perplexities of this kind found in ancient writings which we cannot explain. It is so in *all* ancient records; and all that is usually expected in relation to such difficulties is that we should be able to present a *probable* explanation.

7. *And the nation, &c.* Referring particularly to the Egyptians. ¶ *Will I judge.* The word *judge* in the Bible often means to *execute judgment*, as well as to pronounce it; that is, to *punish*. See John xviii. 31; iii. 17; viii. 50; xii. 47. Acts xxiv. 6. 1 Cor. v. 13, &c. It has this meaning here. God regarded their oppressive acts as *deserving* his indignation, and he evinced it in the *plagues* with which he visited them, and in their overthrow in the Red sea. ¶ *Shall serve me.* Shall worship me, or be regarded as my people. ¶ *In this place.* That is, in the place where God made this promise to Abraham. These words are not found in Genesis; but similar words are found in Ex. iii. 12; and it was a practice in making quotations, to quote the sense only, or to connect two or more promises having relation to the same thing.

8. *And he gave him.* That is, God appointed or commanded this. Gen. xvii. 9-13. ¶ *The covenant.* The word *covenant* denotes properly a compact or agreement between two or more persons, usually attended with seals, or pledges, or sanctions. In Gen. xvii. 7, and elsewhere, it is said that God would establish his *covenant* with Abraham; that is, he made him certain definite promises, attended

with pledges and seals, &c. The idea of a strict *compact* or *agreement* between God and man, as between *equal parties*, is not found in the Bible. It is commonly used, as here, to denote a promise on the part of God, attended with pledges, and demanding, on the part of man, in order to avail himself of its benefits, a stipulated course of conduct. The *covenant* is therefore another name for denoting two things on the part of God: (1.) A *command*, which man is not at liberty to reject, as he *would be* if a literal covenant; and (2.) A *promise*, which is to be fulfilled only on the condition of obedience. The covenant with Abraham was simply a *promise* to give him the land, and to make him a great nation, &c. It was *never* proposed to Abraham with the supposition that he was at liberty to *reject* it, or to *refuse* to comply with its conditions. Circumcision was appointed as the *mark* or *indication* that Abraham and those thus designated were the persons included in the gracious purpose and promise. It served to *separate* them as a peculiar people; a people whose peculiar characteristic it was that they obeyed and served the God who had made the promise to Abraham. The phrase "covenant of circumcision" means, therefore, the covenant or promise which God made to Abraham, of which circumcision was the distinguishing *mark* or *sign*. ¶ *The twelve patriarchs.* The word *patriarch* properly denotes the father and ruler of a family. But it is commonly applied, by way of eminence, to the progenitors of the Jewish race, particularly to the twelve sons of Jacob. Note, Acts ii. 29.

9. *Moved with envy.* That is, dissatisfied with the favour which their father Jacob showed Joseph, and envious at the dreams which indicated that he was to be raised to remarkable honour above his parents and brethren. Gen. xxxvii. 3-11. ¶ *Sold Joseph into Egypt.* Sold him, that he might be taken to Egypt. This was done at the suggestion of *Judah*, who advised it that Joseph might not be put to death by his brethren. Gen. xxxvii.

10 And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he ^a made him governor over Egypt and all his house.

11 Now ^b there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction; and our fathers found no sustenance.

12 But ^c when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.

13 And at the second time Jo-

a Gen.41.40.

b Gen.41.54.

c Gen.42.1,2.

28.—It is possible that Stephen, by this fact, might have designed to prepare the way for a severe rebuke of the Jews for having dealt in a similar manner with their Messiah. ¶ *But God was with him.* God protected him, and overruled all these wicked doings, so that he was raised to extraordinary honours.

10. *And delivered him, &c.* That is, restored him to liberty from his servitude and humiliation, and raised him up to high honours and offices in Egypt. ¶ *Favour and wisdom.* The favour was the result of his wisdom. His wisdom was particularly evinced in interpreting the dreams of Pharaoh. Gen. xli. ¶ *And made him governor, &c.* Gen. xli. 40. ¶ *All his house.* All the family, or all the court and government, of the nation.

11. *Now there came a dearth.* A famine. Gen. xli. 54. ¶ *And Chanaan.* Jacob was living at that time in Canaan. ¶ *Found no sustenance.* No food; no means of living.

12. *Was corn in Egypt.* The word *corn* here rather denotes *wheat*. Note, Matt. xii. 1. ¶ *Our fathers.* His ten sons; all his sons except Joseph and Benjamin. Gen. xlii. Stephen here refers only to the history, without entering into details. By this general reference he sufficiently showed that he believed what Moses had spoken, and did not intend to show him disrespect.

13. *Joseph was made known.* Gen. xlv. 4. ¶ *Joseph's kindred, &c.* His relatives; his family. Gen. xlv. 16.

14. *All his kindred.* His father, and family. Gen. xlv. 17—28; xlv. 1—26. ¶ *Threescore and fifteen souls.* Seventy-five persons. There has been much perplexity felt in the explanation of this passage. In Gen. xlv. 26. Ex. i. 5. and Deut. x. 22, it is expressly said that the number

seph ^d was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh.

14 Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to *him*, and all ^e his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls.

15 So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers,

16 And were carried ^f over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor *the father of Sychem.*

d Gen.45.4,16.

e Gen.46.27. De.10.22.

f Jos.24.32.

which went down to Egypt consisted of but seventy persons. The question is, in what way these accounts can be reconciled? It is evident that Stephen has followed the account which is given by the Septuagint. In Gen. xlv. 27, that version reads, "But the sons of Joseph who were with him in Egypt, were nine souls; all the souls of the house of Jacob which came with Jacob into Egypt, were seventy-five souls." This number is made out by adding these *nine* souls to the sixty-six mentioned in ver. 26. The difference between the Septuagint and Moses is, that the former mentions five descendants of Joseph who are not recorded by the latter. The names of the sons of Ephraim and Manasseh are recorded in 1 Chron. vii. 14—21. Their names were Ashriel, Machir, Zelophehad, Peresh, sons of Manasseh; and Shuthelah, son of Ephraim. Why the Septuagint inserted these, it may not be easy to see. But such was evidently the fact; and the fact accords accurately with the historic record, though Moses did not insert their names. The solution of difficulties in regard to chronology is always difficult; and what might be entirely apparent to a Jew in the time of Stephen, may be wholly inexplicable to us.

15, 16. *And died.* Gen. xlix. 33. ¶ *He and our fathers.* The time which the Israelites remained in Egypt was two hundred and fifteen years; so that all the sons of Jacob were deceased before the Jews went out to go to the land of Canaan. ¶ *And were carried over.* Jacob himself was buried in the field of Macpelah, by Joseph and his brethren. Gen. l. 13. It is expressly said that the bones of Joseph were carried by the Israelites when they went into the land of Canaan, and buried in Shechem. Josh. xxiv. 32.

17 But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people

grew and multiplied in Egypt, 18 Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph.

a Ex. 1.7-9.

Comp. Gen. i. 25. No mention is made in the Old Testament of their carrying the bones of any of the other patriarchs; but the thing is highly probable in itself. If the descendants of Joseph carried *his* bones, it would naturally occur to them to take also the bones of each of the patriarchs, and give them an honourable sepulchre together in the land of promise. Josephus (*Antiq. b. ii. ch. viii. § 2*) says that "the posterity and sons of these men (of the brethren of Joseph), after some time, carried their bodies and buried them in Hebron; but as to the bones of Joseph, they carried them into the land of Canaan afterward, when the Hebrews went out of Egypt." This is the account which Josephus gives, and it is evidently in accordance with the common opinion of the Jewish writers that they were buried in Hebron. Yet the tradition is not uniform. Some of the Jews affirm that they were buried in Sychem. (*Ku-nüel*.) As the Scriptures do not any where deny that the fathers were buried in Sychem, it cannot be proved that Stephen was in error. There is one circumstance of strong probability to show that he was correct. At the time this defence was delivered, *Sychem* was in the hands of the Samaritans, between whom and the Jews there was a violent hostility. Of course the Jews would not be willing to concede that the Samaritans had the bones of their ancestors; and hence perhaps the opinion had been maintained that they were buried in Hebron. ¶ *Into Sychem*. This was a town or village near to Samaria. It was called *Sichar* (Note, John iv. 5), *Shechem*, and *Sychem*. It is now called *Naploos*, or *Naploose*, and is ten miles from Shiloh, and about forty from Jerusalem, towards the north. ¶ *That Abraham bought*. The word *Abraham* here has given rise to considerable perplexity; and it is now pretty generally conceded that it is a mistake. It is certain, from Gen. xxxiii. 19. and Josh. xxiv. 32, that this piece of land was bought, not by Abraham, but by *Jacob*, of the sons of Hamor, the father of *Shechem*. The land which Abraham purchased was the cave of *Macpelah*, of the sons of Heth, in Hebron. Gen. xxiii. Various solutions have been proposed of this difficulty, which it is not necessary to detail. It may be remarked, however,

(1.) That as the text now stands, it is an evident error. This is clear from the passages cited from the Old Testament, above. (2.) It is not at all probable that either Stephen or Luke would have committed such an error. Every consideration must lead us to the conclusion that they were too well acquainted with such prominent points of the Jewish history to commit an error like this. (3.) The *probability*, therefore, is, that the error has arisen since; but *how*, is not known, nor is there any way of ascertaining. All the ancient versions agree in reading *Abraham*. One MS. only reads "*Abraham our father*." Some have supposed, therefore, that it was written "which our father bought," and that some early transcriber inserted the name of Abraham. Others, that the name was omitted entirely by Stephen; and then the antecedent to the verb "bought" will be "*Jacob*," in ver. 15, according with the fact. Other modes have been proposed also, but none are entirely satisfactory. If there was positive proof of Stephen's inspiration, or if it were necessary to make that out, the difficulty would be much greater. But it has already been remarked that there is no decisive evidence of that: and it is not necessary to make out that point to defend the Scriptures. All that can be demanded of the historian is, that he should give a fair account of the defence as it was delivered; and though the *probability* is that Stephen would not commit such an error, yet, admitting that he did, it by no means proves that *Luke* was not inspired, or that *Luke* has committed any error in recording *what was actually said*. ¶ *Of the sons of Emmor*. In the Hebrew, (Gen. xxiii. 19), "the children of Hamor"—but different ways of rendering the same word.

17. *The time of the promise*. The time of the fulfilment of the promise. ¶ *The people grew, &c.* Ex. i. 7—9.

18. *Till another king arose*. This is quoted from Ex. i. 8. What was the name of this king is not certainly known. The common name of all the kings of Egypt was *Pharaoh*, as *Cæsar* became the common name of the emperors of Rome after the time of Julius Cæsar: thus we say, Augustus Cæsar, Tiberius Cæsar, &c. It has commonly been supposed to have been the celebrated Rameses, or Ramses Meï-

19 The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil-entreated our fathers, so ^a that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live.

20 In which time Moses ^b was born, and was ^c exceeding fair, and

^a Ex. i. 22.

^b Ex. 2. 2, &c.

^c or, fair to God.

amount, the sixth king of the eighteenth dynasty; and the event is supposed to have occurred about 1559 years before the Christian era. But M. Champollion supposes that his name was Mandonei, whose reign commenced 1535, and ended 1565 years before Christ. (Essay on the Hieroglyphic System, pp. 94, 95.) ¶ *That knew not Joseph.* It can hardly be supposed that he would be ignorant of the name and deeds of Joseph; and this expression, therefore, probably means that he did not *favour* the designs of Joseph; he did not remember the benefits he had conferred on the nation; or furnish the patronage for the kindred of Joseph which had been secured for them by Joseph under a former reign.—National ingratitude and forgetfulness of favours have not been uncommon in the world; and a change of dynasty or succession has often obliterated all memory of former obligations and compacts.

19. *Dealt subtilly.* He acted deceitfully; he used fraud. The cunning or deceitful attempt which is referred to, is his endeavour to weaken and destroy the Jewish people by causing their male children to be put to death. Ex. i. 22. ¶ *Our kindred.* Our nation, or our ancestors. ¶ *And evil-entreated.* Was unjust and cruel towards them. ¶ *So that, &c.* For that purpose, or to *cause* them to cast them out. He dealt with them in this cruel manner, hoping that the Israelites themselves would destroy their own sons, that they might not grow up to experience the same sufferings as their fathers had. The cunning or subtilty of Pharaoh extended to every thing that he did to oppress, to keep under, and to destroy the children of Israel.

20. *In which time, &c.* During this period of oppression. See Ex. ii. 2, &c. ¶ *Was exceeding fair.* Greek, “was fair to God;” properly rendered *was very handsome*. The word *God* is used in the Greek here in accordance with the Hebrew usage, by which any thing that is very handsome, or lofty, or grand, is thus designated. Thus, Ps. xxxvi. 7, *mountains of God*, mean lofty mountains; Ps. lxxx.

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nourished up in his father's house three months:

21 And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and ^c nourished him for her own son.

22 And Moses was learned in all

^c Ex. 2. 10.

11, *cedars of God*, mean lofty, beautiful cedars. Thus Nineveh is called “a great city to God” (Jonah iii. 3, Greek), meaning a very great city. The expression here means simply that Moses was *very fair*, or handsome. Comp. Heb. xi. 23, where he is called “a proper child,” i. e. a handsome child. It would seem from this, that Moses was preserved by his mother on account of his *beauty*; and this is hinted at in Ex. ii. 2. And it would also seem from this, that Pharaoh had succeeded by his oppressions in what he had attempted; and that it was not unusual for parents among the Jews to *expose* their children, or to put them to death.

21. *Was cast out.* When he was exposed on the banks of the Nile. Ex. ii. 3. ¶ *And nourished him.* Adopted him, and treated him as her son. Ex. ii. 10. It is implied in this, that he was *educated* by her. An adopted son in the family of Pharaoh would be favoured with all the advantages which the land could furnish for an education.

22. *Moses was learned.* Or, *was instructed*. It does not mean that he *had* that learning, but that he was carefully *trained* or *educated* in that wisdom. The passage does not express the fact that Moses was distinguished for *learning*, but that he was carefully *educated*, or that pains were taken to *make* him learned. ¶ *In all the wisdom, &c.* The learning of the Egyptians was confined chiefly to astrology, to the interpretation of dreams, to medicine, to mathematics, and to their sacred science or traditionary doctrines about religion, which were concealed chiefly under their hieroglyphics. Their learning is not unfrequently spoken of in the Scriptures. 1 Kings iv. 30. Comp. Isa. xix. 11, 12. And their knowledge is equally celebrated in the heathen world. It is known that science was carried from Egypt to Phenicia, and thence to Greece; and not a few of the Grecian philosophers travelled to Egypt in pursuit of knowledge. ¶ *And was mighty.* Was powerful, or was distinguished. This means that he was eminent in Egypt, before he

the wisdom of the Egyptians, and ^a was mighty in words and in deeds.

23 And ^b when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.

24 And seeing one of *them* suffer wrong, he defended *him*, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian :

25 For ¹ he supposed his brethren would have understood how that

^a Lu. 24. 19.

^b Ex. 2. 11, &c.

¹ or, *Now*.

conducted the children of Israel forth. It refers to his addresses to Pharaoh, and to the miracles which he wrought *before* their departure. ¶ *In words.* From Ex. iv. 10, it seems that Moses was "slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." When it is said that he was mighty in words, it means that he was mighty in his communications to Pharaoh, though they were spoken by his brother Aaron. Aaron was in his place, and *Moses* addressed Pharaoh through him, who was appointed to deliver the message. Ex. iv. 11—16. ¶ *Deeds.* Miracles. Ex. vii. &c.

23. *Full forty years of age.* This is not recorded in the Old Testament; but it is a constant tradition of the Jews that Moses was forty years of age when he undertook to deliver them. Thus it is said, "Moses lived in the palace of Pharaoh forty years; he was forty years in Midian; and he ministered to Israel forty years." (*Kuinöel*.) ¶ *To visit, &c.* Probably with a view of delivering them from their oppressive bondage. Comp. ver. 25.

24. *Suffer wrong.* The wrong or injury was, that the Egyptian was smiting the Hebrew. Ex. ii. 11, 12. ¶ *Smote the Egyptian.* He slew him, and buried him in the sand.

25. *For he supposed.* This is not mentioned by Moses; but it is not at all improbable. When they saw him *alone* contending with the Egyptian, when it was understood that he had come and taken vengeance on one of their oppressors, it might have been presumed that he regarded himself as directed by God to interpose, and save the people.

26. *And the next day.* Ex. ii. 13. ¶ *He shewed himself.* He appeared in a sudden and unexpected manner to them. ¶ *Unto them.* That is, to two of the Hebrews. Ex. ii. 13. ¶ *As they strove.* As they were engaged in a quarrel. ¶ *Have set them at one.* Greek, "would have

God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.

26 And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?

27 But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?

28 Wilt thou kill me as thou

urged them to peace." This he did by remonstrating with the man that did the wrong. ¶ *Saying.* What follows is not quoted literally from the account which Moses gives, but it is substantially the same. ¶ *Sirs.* Greek, "men." ¶ *Ye are brethren.* You belong not only to the same nation, but you are brethren and companions in affliction, and should not, therefore, contend with each other.—One of the most melancholy scenes in this world is that, where those who are poor, and afflicted, and oppressed, add to all their other calamities, altercations and strifes among themselves. Yet it is from this class that contentions and lawsuits usually arise. The address which Moses here makes to the contending Jews, might be applied to the whole human family, in view of the contentions and wars of nations; 'Ye are *brethren*, members of the same great family, and why do you contend with each other?'

27. *But he that did, &c.* Intent on his purpose, filled with rage and passion, he rejected all interference, and all attempts at peace.—It is usually the man that *does* the injury that is unwilling to be reconciled; and when we find a man that regards the entreaties of his friends as improper interference, when he becomes increasingly angry when we exhort him to peace, it is usually a strong evidence that he is conscious that he has been at fault. If we wish to reconcile parties, we should go first to the man that has been injured. In the controversy between God and man, it is the *sinner* who has done the wrong, that is unwilling to be reconciled, and not God. ¶ *His neighbour.* The Jew with whom he was contending. ¶ *Who made thee, &c.* What right have you to interfere in this matter? The usual salutation with which a man is greeted who attempts to prevent quarrels.

28. *Wilt thou kill me, &c.* How it was

didst the Egyptian yesterday!

29 Then fled Moses at this saying; and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons.

known that he had killed the Egyptian does not appear. It was probably communicated by the man who was rescued from the hands of the Egyptian. Ex. ii. 11, 12.

29. *Then Moses fled, &c.* Moses fled because he now ascertained that it was known. He supposed that it had been unobserved. Ex. ii. 12. But he now supposed that the knowledge of it might reach Pharaoh, and that his life might thus be endangered. Nor did he judge incorrectly; for as soon as Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to take his life. Ex. ii. 15. ¶ *Was a stranger.* Or became a sojourner (παροικίος), one who had a temporary abode in the land. The use of this word implies that he did not expect to make that his permanent dwelling. ¶ *In the land of Madian.* This was a part of Arabia. It was situated on the east side of the Red sea. The city of Midian is placed there by the Arabian geographers; but the Midianites seem to have spread themselves along the desert east of mount Seir, to the vicinity of the Moabites. To the west they extended also to the neighbourhood of mount Sinai. This was extensively a desert region, an unknown land; and Moses expected there to be safe from Pharaoh. ¶ *Where he begat two sons.* He married Zipporah, the daughter of Reuel (Ex. ii. 18), or Jethro (Num. x. 29. Ex. iii. 1), a priest of Midian. The names of the two sons were Gershom and Eliezer. Ex. xviii. 3, 4.

30. *And when forty years, &c.* At the age of eighty years. This, however, was known by tradition. It is not expressly mentioned by Moses. It is said, however, to have been after the king of Egypt had died (Ex. ii. 23); and the tradition is not improbable. ¶ *In the wilderness of mount Sinai.* In the desert adjacent to, or that surrounded mount Sinai. In Ex. iii. 2, it is said that this occurred at mount Horeb. But there is no contradiction; Horeb and Sinai are different peaks or elevations of the same mountain. They are represented as springing from the same base, and branching out in different elevations. The mountains, according to Burckhardt, are a prodigious pile, comprehending many peaks, and about thirty miles in diameter. From one part of this moun-

30 And ^a when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina, an angel of the Lord, in a flame of fire in a bush.

^a Ex. 3.2, &c.

tain, *Sinai*, the law was given to the children of Israel. ¶ *An angel of the Lord.* The word *angel* means properly a messenger (Note, Matt. i. 20), and is applied to the invisible spirits in heaven, to men, to the winds, or pestilence, or to whatever is appointed as a messenger to make known the will of God. The mere name, therefore, can determine nothing about the nature of the messenger. That name might be applied to any messenger, even an inanimate object. The nature and character of this messenger are to be determined by other considerations. The word may denote that the bush on fire was the messenger. But a comparison with the other places where this occurs will show that it was a celestial messenger, and perhaps that it was the Messiah who was yet to come, appearing to take the people of Israel under his own charge and direction. Comp. John i. 11, where the Jews are called "his own." In Ex. iii. 2, it is said that the angel of the Lord appeared in a flame of fire; in ver. 4, it is said that Jehovah spake to him out of the midst of the bush; language which implies that God was there, and which is strongly expressive of the doctrine that the angel was Jehovah. In Ex. xxiii. 20, 21, God says, "I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice," &c. ver. 23; xxxii. 34; xxxiii. 2. In all these places this angel is mentioned as an extraordinary messenger to conduct them to the land of Canaan. He was to guide them, defend them, and drive out the nations before them. All these circumstances seem to point to the conclusion that this was no other than the future Deliverer of the world, who came then to take his people under his own guidance, as emblematic of the future redemption of mankind. ¶ *In a flame of fire.* That is, in what appeared to be a flame of fire. The bush or clump of trees seemed to be on fire, or to be illuminated with a peculiar splendour. God is often represented as encompassed with this splendour, or glory. Luke ii. 9. Matt. xvii. 1—5. Acts ix. 3; xii. 7. ¶ *In a bush.* In a grove, or clump of trees. Probably the light was seen issuing from the midst of such a grove.

31 When Moses saw *it*, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold *it*, the voice of the Lord came unto him,

32 *Saying, I am the God* ^a of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold.

33 Then said the Lord to him, Put ^b off thy shoes from thy feet; for the place where thou standest is holy ground.

34 I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their

^a Matt. 22. 32. He. 11. 16.

^b Jos. 5. 15. Ec. 5. 1.

31. *He wondered, &c.* What particularly attracted his attention was the fact that the bush was not consumed. Ex. ii. 2, 3. ¶ *The voice of the Lord.* Jehovah spake to him from the midst of the bush. He did not see him, but he simply heard a voice.

32. *Saying, I am the God, &c.* See this explained, Notes, Matt. xxii. 32. ¶ *Then Moses trembled.* Ex. iii. 6.

33. *Then said the Lord, &c.* In Ex. iii. this is introduced in a different order, as being spoken before God said "I am the God," &c. ¶ *Put off thy shoes, &c.* Ex. iii. 5. To put off the shoes, or sandals, was an act of reverence. Especially the ancients were not permitted to enter a temple or holy place with their shoes on. Indeed, it was customary for the Jews to remove their shoes whenever they entered any house, as a mere matter of civility. Comp. Notes, John xii. 5. See Josh. v. 15. ¶ *Is holy ground.* Is rendered sacred by the symbol of the divine presence. We should enter the sanctuary, the place set apart for divine worship, not only with reverence in our hearts, but with every external indication of veneration. Solemn awe, and deep seriousness, become the place set apart to the service of God.

34. *I have seen, &c.* The repetition of this word is in accordance with the usage of the Hebrew writers when they wish to represent any thing emphatically. ¶ *Their groaning.* Under their oppressions. ¶ *Am come down.* This is spoken in accordance with human conceptions. It means that God was about to deliver them. ¶ *I will send thee, &c.* This is a mere summary of what is expressed at much greater length in Ex. iii. 7—10.

groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.

35 This Moses, whom they refused, (saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge?) the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer, by the hand of the ^c angel which appeared to him in the bush.

36 He brought them out, after ^d that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness, forty ^e years.

37 This is that Moses which said ^f unto the children of Israel, A

^c Ex. 14. 19. Nu. 20. 16.

^d Ex. c. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, & 14.

^e Ex. 16. 35. ^f De. 18. 15, 16. c. 3. 22.

35. *Whom they refused.* That is, when he first presented himself to them. Ex. ii. 13, 14. Stephen introduces and dwells upon this refusal in order, perhaps, to remind them that this had been the character of their nation; and to prepare the way for the change which he intended to bring against those whom he addressed, as being stiff-necked and rebellious. See ver. 51, 52, &c. ¶ *A ruler.* A military leader, or a governor in civil matters. ¶ *A deliverer.* A Redeemer. λυτρωτήν. It properly means one who redeems a captive or a prisoner by paying a price or ransom. And it is applied thus to our Lord Jesus, as having redeemed or purchased sinners by his blood as a price. Titus ii. 14. 1 Pet. i. 18. Heb. ix. 12. It is used here, however, in a more general sense to denote the deliverance, without specifying the manner. Comp. Ex. vi. 6. Luke xxiv. 21; i. 68; ii. 38. ¶ *By the hand of the angel.* Under the direction and by the help of the angel. Num. xx. 16. See on ver. 30.

36. *Wonders and signs.* Miracles, and remarkable interpositions of God. See Note, Acts ii. 22. ¶ *In the land of Egypt.* By the ten plagues. Ex. iv—xi. ¶ *In the Red sea.* Dividing it, and conducting the Israelites in safety, and overthrowing the Egyptians. Ex. xiv. ¶ *In the wilderness.* During their forty years' journey to the promised land. The wonders or miracles were, providing them with manna daily; with flesh in a miraculous manner; with water from the rock, &c. Ex. xvi. xvii. &c.

37. *Which said, &c.* Deut. xv. 18. See this explained Acts iii. 22. Stephen introduced this to remind them of the promise of a Messiah; to show his faith in

prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, ¹ like unto me; him ^a shall ye hear.

38 This ^b is he that was in the church in the wilderness, with the angel ^c which spake to him ^d in the mount Sina, and *with* our fathers; who ^e received ^f the lively oracles to give unto us:

39 To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust *him* from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,

40 Saying ^g unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for *as for* this

¹ or, *as myself*. ^a Matt. 17. 5. ^b He. 2. 2. ^c Is. 63. 9. Gal. 3. 19. ^d Ex. 19. 3, 17. ^e De. 5. 27, 31. Jno. 1. 17. ^f Ro. 3. 2. ^g Ex. 32. 1.

it; and *particularly*, to remind them of their obligation to hear and obey him.

38. *In the church.* The word *church* means literally *the people called out*; and is applied with great propriety to the assembly or multitude called out of Egypt, and separated from the world. It has not, however, of necessity our idea of a church; but means the *assembly*, or people called out of Egypt, and placed under the conduct of Moses. ¶ *With the angel.* In this place there is undoubted reference to the giving of the law on mount Sinai. Yet that was done by God himself. Ex. xx. It is clear, therefore, that by the *angel* here, Stephen intends to designate him who was God. It may be observed, however, that the *law* is represented as having been given by the ministry of an angel (in this place) and by the ministry of *angels*, Acts vii. 53. Heb. ii. 2. The essential idea is, that God did it by a messenger, or by mediators. The *character* and *rank* of the messengers, or of the *principal* messenger, must be learned by looking at all the circumstances of the case. ¶ *The lively oracles.* See Rom. iii. 2. The word *oracles* here means *commands* or *laws* of God. The word *lively*, or *living* (ζῶντες), stands in opposition to that which is dead, or useless, and means that which is vigorous, efficacious; and in this place it means that the commands were of such a nature, and given in such circumstances, as to secure attention; to produce obedience; to excite them to act for God—in opposition to laws which would fall powerless, and produce no effect.

39. *Would not obey, &c.* This refers to what they said of him when he was in

Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

41 And they made a calf ^h in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.

42 Then God turned and gave ⁱ them up to worship the ^j host of heaven: as it is written ^k in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts, and sacrifices, *by the space of* forty years in the wilderness?

^h De. 9. 16. Ps. 106. 19, 20. ⁱ Ps. 81. 12. ^j De. 4. 19. 2 Ki. 17. 16. Jer. 19. 13. ^k Am. 5. 25, 26.

the mount. Ex. xxxii. 1. 23. ¶ *In their hearts turned, &c.* They wished to return to Egypt. They regretted that they had come out of Egypt, and desired again the things which they had there, as preferable to what they had in the desert. Num. xi. 5. Perhaps, however, the expression means, not that they desired literally to *return* to Egypt, but that *their hearts inclined to the habits and morals of the Egyptians*. They forsook God, and imitated the idolatries of the Egyptians.

40. *Saying unto Aaron.* Ex. xxxii. 1. ¶ *Make us gods.* That is, idols.

41. *And they made a calf.* This was made of the ear-rings and ornaments which they had brought from Egypt. Ex. xxxii. 2—4. Stephen introduces this to remind them how prone the nation had been to reject God, and walk in the ways of sin.

42. *Then God turned.* That is, turned away from them; abandoned them to their own desires. ¶ *The host of heaven.* The stars, or heavenly bodies. The word *host* means *armies*. It is applied to the heavenly bodies because they are very numerous, and appear to be *marshalled* or arrayed in military order. It is from this that God is called JEHOVAH of hosts, as being the ruler of these well-arranged heavenly bodies. Isa. i. 9. The proof that they did this, Stephen proceeds to allege by a quotation from the prophets. ¶ *In the book of the prophets.* Amos v. 25, 26. The twelve minor prophets were commonly written in one volume, and were called the Book of the Prophets; the book containing these several prophecies, Daniel, Hosea, Micah, &c. They were small

43 Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye

made, to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.

44 Our fathers had the tabernacle

tracts separately, and were bound up together to preserve them from being lost. This passage is not quoted literally; it is evidently made from memory; and though in its main spirit it coincides with the passage in Amos, yet in some important respects it varies from it. ¶ *O ye house of Israel.* Ye people of Israel. ¶ *Have ye offered, &c.* That is, ye have *not* offered. The interrogative form is often an emphatic way of saying that the thing had *not* been done. But it is certain that the Jews *did* offer sacrifices to God in the wilderness, though it is also certain that they did not do it with a pure and upright heart. They kept up the *form* of worship generally, but they frequently forsook God, and offered worship to idols. *Through* the continuous space of forty years they did *not* honour God, but often departed from him, and worshipped idols.

43. *Yea, ye took up.* That is, you *bore*, or you carried with you, for purposes of idolatrous worship. ¶ *The tabernacle.* This word properly means a *tent*; but it is also applied to the small tent or house in which was contained the image of the god; the house, box, or tent, in which the idol was placed. It is customary for idolatrous nations to bear their idols about with them, enclosed in *cases* or boxes of various sizes, usually very small, as their idols are commonly small. Probably they were made in the shape of small *temples* or tabernacles; and such appear to have been the *silver shrines* for Diana, made at Ephesus. Acts xix. 24. These shrines, or images, were borne with them as a species of *amulet*, or *charm*, or *talisman*, to defend them from evil. Such images the Jews seem to have borne with them. ¶ *Moloch.* This word comes from the Hebrew word signifying *king*. This was a god of the Ammonites, to whom human sacrifices were offered. Moses in several places forbids the Israelites, under penalty of death, to dedicate their children to Moloch, by making them pass through the fire. Lev. xviii. 21; xx. 2—5. There is great probability that the Hebrews were addicted to the worship of this deity after they entered the land of Canaan. Solomon built a temple to Moloch on the mount of Olives (1 Kings xi. 7); and Manasseh made his son pass through the fire in honour of this idol. 2 Kings xxi. 3, 4. The image of this idol was made of brass, and his arms extended so as to embrace

any one; and when they offered children to him, they heated the statue, and when it was burning hot, they placed the child in his arms, where it was soon destroyed by heat. It is not certain what this god was supposed to represent. Some suppose it was in honour of the planet Saturn; others, the sun; others, Mercury, Venus, &c. What particular god it was, is not material. It was the most cutting reproof that could be made to the Jews, that their fathers had been guilty of worshipping this idol. ¶ *And the star.* The Hebrew in this place is, “*Chiun* your images, the star of your god.” The expression here used leads us to suppose that this was a *star* which was worshipped, but *what* star it is not easy to ascertain; nor is it easy to determine why it is called both *Chiun* and *Remphan*. Stephen quotes from the LXX. They have rendered the word *Chiun* by the word *Raiphan*, or *Rephan*, easily changed into *Remphan*. Why the LXX. adopted this, is not known. It was probably, however, from one of two causes. (1.) Either because the word *Chiun* in Hebrew meant the same as *Remphan* in the language of Egypt, where the translation was made; or, (2.) Because the *object* of worship called *Chiun* in Hebrew, was called *Remphan* in the language of Egypt. It is generally agreed that the *object* of their worship was the planet *Saturn*, or *Mars*, both of which planets were worshipped as gods of evil influence. In Arabic, the word *Chevan* denotes the planet Saturn. Probably *Rephan*, or *Remphan*, is the Coptic name for the same planet, and the Septuagint adopted this because their translation was made in Egypt, where the Coptic language was spoken. ¶ *Figures which ye made.* Images of the god which they made. See the article *Chiun* in Robinson's Calmet. ¶ *And I will carry you away, &c.* This is simply expressing in few words what is stated at greater length in Amos v. 27. In Hebrew it is *Damascus*; but this evidently denotes the eastern region, in which also Babylon was situated.

44. *The tabernacle of witness.* The *tent* or *tabernacle* which Moses was commanded to make. It was called a *tabernacle of witness*, or of *testimony*, because it was the visible witness or proof of God's presence with them; the evidence that he to whom it was devoted was their protector

of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, ¹ speaking unto Moses, that ^a he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.

45 Which ^b also our fathers ² that came after, brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom ^c God drove out before the

¹ or, *who spake.* ^a Ex. 25. 40; 26. 30. He. 8. 5.
^b Jos. 3. 14. ² or, *having received.* ^c Ne. 9. 24.
 Ps. 44. 2; 78. 55.

and guide. The name is given either to the *tent*, or to the two tables of stone, or to the ark; all of which were *witnesses*, or *evidences* of God's relation to them as their lawgiver and guide. Ex. xvi. 34; xxv. 16. 21; xxvii. 21; xxx. 6. 36; xxxi. 18, &c. Num. i. 50. 53. The two charges against Stephen were that he had spoken blasphemy against Moses, or his law, and against the temple. ch. vi. 13, 14. In the previous part of this defence he had shown his respect for Moses and his law. He now proceeds to show that he did not design to speak with disrespect of the temple, or the holy places of their worship. He therefore expresses his belief in the divine appointment of both the tabernacle (ver. 44—46) and of the temple (ver. 47). ¶ *According to the fashion, &c.* According to the *pattern* that was shown to him, by which it was to be made. Ex. xxv. 9. 40; xxvi. 30. As God showed him *a pattern*, it proved that the tabernacle had his sanction. Against that Stephen did not intend to speak.

— 45. *Our fathers that came after.* None of the generation that came out of Egypt were permitted to enter into the land of Canaan on account of their rebellion, except Caleb and Joshua. Num. xiv. 22—24; xxxii. 11, 12. Hence it is said that their fathers *who came after*, i. e. after the generation when the tabernacle was built. The Greek, however, here means, properly, “which also our fathers, having received, brought,” &c. The sense is not materially different. Stephen means that it was not brought in by that generation, but by the next. ¶ *With Jesus.* This should have been rendered “with *Joshua*.” *Jesus* is the Greek mode of writing the name *Joshua*. But the Hebrew name should by all means have been retained here, as also in Heb. iv. 8. ¶ *Into the possession of the Gentiles.* Into the land possessed by the Gentiles, that is, into the promised land then occupied by the Canaanites, &c. ¶ *Whom God, &c.* That is, he continued to drive them out until the time of David, when they were

face of our fathers, unto the days of David,

46 Who found favour ^d before God, and desired ^e to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob.

47 But Solomon ^f built him an house.

48 Howbeit, ^g the Most High

^d 1 Sam. 16. 1. ^e 1 Chr. 22. 7. ^f 1 Ki. 6. 1, &c.; 8. 20.
^g 1 Ki. 8. 27. c. 17. 24.

completely expelled. Or it may mean that the tabernacle was in the possession of the Jews, and was the appointed place of worship, until the time of David, who desired to build him a temple. The Greek is ambiguous. The *connexion* favours the latter interpretation.

46. *Who found favour, &c.* That is, God granted him great prosperity, and delivered him from his enemies. ¶ *To find a tabernacle.* To prepare a permanent dwelling-place for the ark, and for the visible symbols of the divine presence. Hitherto the ark had been kept in the tabernacle, and had been borne about from place to place. David sought to build an house that should be permanent, where the ark might be deposited. 2 Sam. vii. 1 Chron. xxii. 7.

47. *But Solomon, &c.* Built the temple. David was not permitted to do it because he had been a man of war. 1 Chron. xxii. 8. David prepared the principal materials for the temple, but Solomon built it. 1 Chron. xxii. Comp. 1 Kings vi.

48. *Howbeit.* But. Why Stephen added this, is not very clear. He was charged with speaking against the temple. He had now shown that he had due veneration for it, by his declaring that it had been built by the command of God. But he now adds, that God does not need such a temple. Heaven is his throne; the universe his dwelling-place; and therefore this temple might be destroyed. A new, glorious truth was to be revealed to mankind, that God was not *confined* in his worship to any age, or people, or nation. In entire consistency, therefore, with all proper respect for the temple at Jerusalem, it might be maintained that the time would come when that temple would be destroyed, and when God might be worshipped by all nations. ¶ *The Most High.* God. This sentiment was expressed by Solomon when the temple was dedicated. 1 Kings viii. 27. ¶ *As saith the prophet.* Isa. lxxv. 1, 2. The place is not literally quoted, but the sense is given.

dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,

49 Heaven ^a is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?

50 Hath not my hand made all these things?

51 Ye stiff-necked, ^b and uncir-

^a Is. 66. 1, 2.

^b Ex. 32. 9. Is. 48. 4.

49. *Heaven is my throne.* See Note, Matt. v. 34. ¶ *Earth is my footstool.* Note, Matt. v. 35. ¶ *What house, &c.* What house or temple can be large or magnificent enough for the dwelling of Him who made all things? ¶ *The place of my rest.* My home, my abode, my fixed seat or habitation. Comp. Ps. xcv. 11.

51. *Ye stiff-necked.* The discourse of Stephen has every appearance of having been interrupted by the clamours and opposition of the sanhedrim. This verse has no immediate connexion with that which precedes; and *appears* to have been spoken in the midst of much opposition and clamour. If we may conjecture in this case, it would seem that the Jews saw the drift of his argument; that they interrupted him; and that when the tumult had somewhat subsided, he addressed them in the language of this verse, showing them that they sustained a character precisely similar to their rebellious fathers. The word *stiff-necked* is often used in the Old Testament. Ex. xxxii. 9; xxxiii. 3. 5; xxxiv. 9. Deut. ix. 6. 13; x. 16, &c. It is a figurative expression taken from oxen that were refractory, and that would not submit to be yoked. Applied to men, it means that they were stubborn, contumacious, and unwilling to submit to the restraints of law. ¶ *Uncircumcised in heart.* Circumcision was a sign of being a Jew—of acknowledging the authority of the laws of Moses. It was also emblematic of purity, and of submission to the law of God. The expression *uncircumcised in heart* denotes those who were not willing to acknowledge that law, and submit to it. They had hearts filled with vicious and unsubdued affections and desires. ¶ *And ears.* That is, who are unwilling to hear what God says. Comp. Lev. xxvi. 41. Jer. ix. 26. Notes on Rom. ii. 28, 29. ¶ *Resist the Holy Ghost.* You oppose the message which is brought to you by the authority of God, and the inspiration of his Spirit. The message

came in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye.

52 Which ^d of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just ^e One, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers.

53 Who have received the law

^c Lev. 26. 41. Jer. 9. 26. Rom. 2. 28, 29.

^d 2Chr. 36. 16.

1Th. 2. 15.

^e c. 3. 14.

brought by Moses; by the prophets; by the Saviour; and by the apostles—all by the infallible direction of the Holy Ghost—they and their fathers opposed. ¶ *As your fathers did, &c.* As he had specified in ver. 27. 35. 39—43.

52. *Which of the prophets, &c.* The interrogative form here is a strong mode of saying that they had persecuted *all* the prophets. It was *the characteristic of the nation* to persecute the messengers of God. This is not to be taken as literally and universally true; but it was a general truth; it was the national characteristic. See Notes, Matt. xxi. 33—40; xxiii. 29—35. ¶ *And they have slain them, &c.* That is, they have slain the prophets, whose main message was that the Messiah was to come. It was a great aggravation of their offence, that they put to death the messengers which foretold the greatest blessing that the nation could receive. ¶ *The Just One.* The Messiah. See Note, ch. iii. 14. ¶ *Of whom ye, &c.* You thus show that you resemble those who rejected and put to death the prophets. You have even gone beyond them in guilt, because you have put the Messiah himself to death. ¶ *The betrayers.* They are called *betrayers* here because they employed Judas to betray him—agreeable to the maxim in law, *He who does any thing by another, is held to have done it himself.*

53. *Who have received the law.* The law of Moses, given on mount Sinai. ¶ *By the disposition of angels.* There has been much diversity of opinion in regard to this phrase, εἰς διαταγὰς ἁγγέλων. The word translated *disposition* does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It properly means the *constituting or arranging* of an army; disposing it into ranks and proper divisions. Hence it has been supposed to mean that the law was given amidst the various ranks of angels, being present to witness its promulgation. Others suppose that the angels were employed as

by ^a the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

54 When they heard these things, ^b they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth.

55 But he, being ^c full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

^a Gal. 3. 19.

^b c. 5. 33.

^c c. 6. 5.

agents or instruments to communicate the law. All that the expression fairly implies is the former; that the law was given amidst the attending ranks of angels, as if they were summoned to witness the pomp and ceremony of giving *law* to an entire people, and through them to an entire world. It should be added, moreover, that the Jews applied the word *angels* to any of the messengers of God; to fire, and tempest, and wind, &c. And all that Stephen means here, may be to express the common Jewish opinion, that God was attended on this occasion by the heavenly hosts; and by the symbols of his presence, the fire, and smoke, and tempest. Comp. Ps. civ. 4; lxviii. 17. Other places declare that the law was spoken by *an angel*, one eminent above all attending angels, the peculiar messenger of God. See Note on ver. 38. It is plain that Stephen spoke only the common sentiment of the Jews. Thus Herod is introduced by Josephus (Antiq. b. xv. ch. v. § 3) as saying, "We have learned from God the most excellent of our doctrines, and the most holy part of our law *by angels*," &c. In the eyes of the Jews, it justly gave increased majesty and solemnity to the law, that it had been given in so grand and imposing circumstances. And it greatly aggravated their guilt, that notwithstanding this, they had not kept it.

54. *They were cut to the heart.* They were exceedingly enraged and indignant. The whole course of the speech had been such as to excite their anger, and now they could restrain themselves no longer. ¶ *They gnashed on him*, &c. Expressive of the bitterness and malignity of their feeling.

55. *Full of the Holy Ghost.* See Note, ch. vi. 5. ¶ *Looked up steadfastly.* Fixed his eyes intently on heaven. Foreseeing his danger; and the effect his speech had produced—seeing that there was no safety in the great council of the nation, and no prospect of justice at their hands, he cast his eyes to heaven and sought protec-

56 And said, Behold, I see the ^d heavens opened, and ^e the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

58 And cast ^f him out of the city, and stoned *him*: and the witnesses

^d Eze. 1. 1.

^e Dan. 7. 13.

^f Lu. 4. 29. He. 13. 12, 13.

tion there.—When dangers threaten us, our hope of safety lies in heaven. When men threaten our persons, reputation, or lives, it becomes us to fix our eyes on the heavenly world; and we shall not look in vain. ¶ *And saw the glory of God.* This phrase is commonly used to denote the visible symbols of God. It means some magnificent representation; a splendour, or light, that is the appropriate exhibition of the presence of God. Matt. xvi. 27; xxiv. 30. Note, Luke ii. 9. In the case of Stephen there is every indication of a vision, or supernatural representation of the heavenly objects; something in advance of mere *faith*, such as dying Christians now have. What was its precise nature, we have no means of ascertaining. Objects were often represented to prophets by *visions*; and probably something similar is intended here. It was such an elevation of view, such a representation of truth, and of the glory of God, as to be denoted by the word *see*; though it is not to be maintained that Stephen really saw the Saviour with the bodily eye. ¶ *On the right hand of God.* That is, exalted to a place of honour and power in the heavens. Note, Mark xiv. 62. Acts ii. 25.

56. *I saw the heavens opened.* A figurative expression, denoting that he was permitted to see *into* heaven, or to see what was there, *as if* the firmament was divided, and the eye was permitted to penetrate the eternal world. Comp. Ezek. i. 1.

57. *Then they cried out.* That is, probably, the people, not the members of the council. It is evident he was put to death in a popular tumult. They had charged him with blasphemy; and they regarded what he had now said as full proof of it. ¶ *And stopped their ears.* That they might hear no more blasphemy. ¶ *With one accord.* In a tumult; unitedly.

58. *And cast him out of the city.* This was in accordance with the usual custom. In Lev. xxiv. 14, it was directed to bring forth him that had cursed without the

* laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was ^b Saul.

59 And they stoned Stephen,

a c.6.13.

b c.8.1,3; 22.20.

camp; and it was not usual, the Jewish writers inform us, to stone in the presence of the sanhedrim. Though this was a popular tumult, and Stephen was condemned without the regular process of trial, yet some of the *forms* of law were observed, and he was stoned in the manner directed in the case of blasphemers. ¶ *And stoned him.* This was the punishment appointed in the case of blasphemy. Lev. xxiv. 16. Note, John x. 31. ¶ *And the witnesses.* That is, the false witnesses who bore testimony against him. ch. vi. 13. It was directed in the law (Deut. xvii. 7) that the *witnesses* in the case should be first in executing the sentence of the law. This was done to prevent false accusations by the prospect that *they* must be employed as executioners. After *they* had commenced the process of execution, all the people joined in it. Deut. xvii. 7. Lev. xxiv. 16. ¶ *Laid down their clothes.* Their *outer garments*. They were accustomed to lay these aside when they ran or worked. Note, Matt. v. 40. ¶ *At a young man's feet, &c.* That is, they procured him to take care of their garments. This is mentioned solely because Saul, or Paul, afterwards became so celebrated, first as a persecutor, and then an apostle. His whole heart was in this persecution of Stephen; and he himself afterwards alluded to this circumstance as an evidence of his sinfulness in persecuting the Lord Jesus. Acts xxii. 20.

59. *Calling upon God.* The word *God* is not in the original, and should not have been in the translation. It is in none of the ancient MSS. or versions. It should have been rendered, They stoned Stephen, invoking, or calling upon, and saying, Lord Jesus, &c. That is, he was engaged in *prayer* to the Lord Jesus. The word is used to express *prayer* in the following, among other places: 2 Cor. i. 23, "I call God to witness." 1 Pet. i. 17, "And if ye call on the Father," &c. Acts ii. 21, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord," &c. ix. 14; xxii. 16. Rom. x. 12, 13, 14. This was, therefore, an act of worship; a solemn invocation of the Lord Jesus, in the most interesting circumstances in which a man can be placed—in his dying moments. And this shows that it is *right* to worship the Lord Jesus, and to pray to him. For if Stephen was *inspired*, it settles the question. The ex-

calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive ^c my spirit!

60 And he kneeled down, and

c Ps.31.5. Lu.23.46.

ample of an inspired man in such circumstances, is a safe and correct example. If it should be said that the inspiration of *Stephen* cannot be made out, yet the inspiration of *Luke*, who has recorded it, will not be called in question. Then the following circumstances show that *he*, an inspired man, regarded it as right, and as a proper example to be followed. (1.) He has recorded it without the slightest expression of an opinion that it was improper. On the contrary, there is every evidence that he regarded the conduct of Stephen in this case as right and praiseworthy. There is, therefore, this attestation to its propriety. (2.) The Spirit that inspired Luke knew what use would be made of this case. He knew that it would be used as an *example*, and as an evidence that it was *right* to worship the Lord Jesus. It is one of the cases which has been used to perpetuate the worship of the Lord Jesus in every age. If it was wrong, it is inconceivable that it should be recorded without some expression of disapprobation. (3.) The case is strikingly similar to that recorded in John xx. 28, where Thomas offered worship to the Lord Jesus, *as his God*, without reproof. If Thomas did it in the presence of the Saviour without reproof, it was right. If Stephen did it without any expression of disapprobation from the inspired historian, it was right. (4.) These examples were used to encourage Christians and Christian martyrs to offer homage to Jesus Christ. Thus Pliny, writing to the emperor Trajan, and giving an account of the Christians in Bythnia, says, that they were accustomed to meet and *sing hymns to Christ as to God.* (Lardner.) (5.) It is worthy of remark, that Stephen in his death offered the same act of homage to Christ, that Christ himself did to the Father, when he died. Luke xxiii. 46. From all these considerations, it follows that the Lord Jesus is an object of worship; that in most solemn circumstances it is proper to call upon him, to worship him, and to commit our dearest interests to his hands. If this may be done, he is divine. ¶ *Receive my spirit.* That is, receive it to thyself; take it to thine abode in heaven.

60. *And he kneeled down.* This seems to have been a *voluntary* kneeling; a placing himself in this position for the purpose of *prayer*, choosing to die in this

cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay
 "not this sin to their charge! And
 when he had said this, he fell
 asleep.

a Matt. 5. 44. Lu. 23. 34.

attitude. ¶ *Lord.* That is, Lord *Jesus*.
 Note, ch. i. 24. ¶ *Lay not, &c.* Forgive
 them. This passage strikingly resembles
 the dying prayer of the Lord Jesus. Luke
 xiii. 34. Nothing but the Christian reli-
 gion will enable a man to utter this pas-
 sage in his dying moments. ¶ *He fell*
asleep. This is the usual mode of express-
 ing the death of saints in the Bible. It is
 an expression indicating, (1.) The *peace-*
fulness of their death, compared with the
 alarm of sinners; (2.) The hope of a re-
 surrection; as we retire to sleep with the
 hope of again awaking to the duties and
 enjoyments of life. See John xi. 11, 12.
 1 Cor. xi. 30; xv. 51. 1 Thess. iv. 14; v.
 10. Matt. ix. 24.

In view of the death of this first Chris-
 tian martyr, we may remark,

1. That it is right to address to the Lord
 Jesus the language of prayer.

2. It is peculiarly proper to do it in
 afflictions, and in the prospect of death.
 Heb. iv. 15.

3. Sustaining grace will be derived in
 trials chiefly from a view of the Lord
 Jesus. If we can look to him as *our* Sa-
 viour, see him to be exalted to deliver us,
 and truly commit our souls to him, we
 shall find the grace which we shall need
 in our afflictions.

4. We should have such confidence in
 him, as to enable us to commit ourselves
 to him at any time. To do this, we should
 live a life of faith. In health, and youth,
 and strength, we should seek him as *our*
first and best friend.

5. While we are in health, we should
 prepare to die. What an unfit place for
 preparation for death would have been
 the situation of Stephen! How impossi-
 ble then would it have been to have made
 preparation! Yet the dying bed is often
 a place as unfit to prepare as were the
 circumstances of Stephen. When racked
 with pain, when faint and feeble, when
 the mind is indisposed to thought, or
 when it raves in the wildness of deliri-
 um, what an unfit place is this to prepare
 to die. I have seen many dying beds; I
 have seen many in all stages of their last
 sickness; but never have I yet seen a
 dying bed which seemed to me to be a
 proper place to make preparation for eter-
 nity.

6. How peaceful and calm is a death

CHAPTER VIII.

AND Saul ^b was consenting unto
 his death. And at that time
 there was a great persecution against

b c. 7. 58.

like that of Stephen, when compared
 with the alarms and anguish of a sinner!
 One moment of such peace in that trying
 time, is better than all the pleasures and
 honours which the world can bestow.
 And to *obtain* such peace, the dying sin-
 ner would be willing to give all the
 wealth of the Indies, and all the crowns
 of the earth. So may I die—and so may
 all my readers—enabled, like this dying
 martyr, to commit my departing spirit to
 the sure keeping of the great Redeemer!
 When we take a parting view of the
 world; when our eyes shall be turned
 for the last time to take a look of friends
 and relatives; and when the darkness of
 death shall begin to come around us; then
 may we be enabled to cast the eye of faith
 to the heavens, and say, 'Lord Jesus, re-
 ceive our spirits;' and thus fall asleep,
 peaceful in death, in the hope of the re-
 surrection of the just.

CHAPTER VIII.

1. *And Saul was consenting, &c.* Was
 pleased with his being put to death, and
 approved it. Comp. ch. xxii. 20. This
 part of the verse should have been con-
 nected with the previous chapter. ¶ *At*
that time. That is, immediately follow-
 ing the death of Stephen. The persecu-
 tion arose on account of Stephen. ch. xi.
 19. The tumult did not subside when
 Stephen was killed. Their anger con-
 tinued to be excited against *all* Chris-
 tians. They had become so embittered
 by the zeal and success of the apostles,
 and by their frequent charges of *murder*
 in putting the Son of God to death, that
 they resolved at once to put a period to
 their progress and success. This was the
first persecution against Christians; the
 first in a series that terminated only when
 the religion which they wished to destroy
 was fully established on the ruins of both
 Judaism and Paganism. ¶ *The church.*
 The collection of Christians which were
 now organized into a church. The church
 at Jerusalem was the *first* that was col-
 lected. ¶ *All scattered.* That is, the
 great mass of Christians. ¶ *The regions*
of Judea, &c. See Note, Matt. i. 22.
 ¶ *Except the apostles.* Probably the other
 Christians fled from fear. Why the apos-
 tles, who were particularly in danger, did
 not flee also, is not stated by the historian.
 Having been, however, more fully in-

the church which was at Jerusalem ; and they were all scattered ^a abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

^a c. 11. 19.

structed than the others, and having been taught their duty by the example and teaching of the Saviour, they resolved, it seems, to remain and brave the fury of the persecutors. For *them* to have fled then would have exposed them, as leaders and founders of the new religion, to the charge of timidity and weakness. They therefore resolved to remain in the midst of their persecutors ; and a merciful Providence watched over them, and defended them from harm. The dispersion extended not only to Judea and Samaria, but those who fled carried the gospel also to Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch. ch. xi. 19. There was a reason why this was permitted. The early converts were Jews. They had strong feelings of attachment to the city of Jerusalem, to the temple, and to the land of their fathers. Yet it was the design of the Lord Jesus that the gospel should be preached every where. To accomplish this, he suffered a persecution to rage ; and they were scattered abroad, and bore his gospel to other cities and lands. Good thus came out of evil ; and the first persecution resulted, as all others have done, in advancing the cause which was intended to be destroyed.

2. *And devout men.* Religious men. The word used here does not imply of necessity that they were Christians. There might have been Jews who did not approve the popular tumult, and the murder of Stephen, and who gave him a decent burial. Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, both Jews, thus gave to the Lord Jesus a decent burial. John xix. 38, 39. ¶ *Carried Stephen.* The word translated *carried*, means properly to *collect*, as fruits, &c. Then it is applied to all the preparations necessary for fitting a dead body for burial, as *collecting*, or confining it by bandages, with spices, &c. ¶ *And made great lamentation.* This was usual among the Jews at a funeral. See Note, Matt. ix. 23.

3. *As for Saul.* But Saul. He had no concern in the pious attentions shown to Stephen, but engaged with zeal in the work of persecution. ¶ *He made havoc.*

3 As for Saul, he ^b made havoc of the church, entering into every house ; and haling men and women, committed *them* to prison.

4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad, went every where preaching the word.

^b c. 26. 10, 11. Gal. 1. 13.

ἰλυμνίζετο. This word is commonly applied to wild beasts, to lions, wolves, &c. and denotes the devastations which they commit. Saul raged against the church like a wild beast—a strong expression, denoting the zeal and fury with which he engaged in persecution. ¶ *Entering into every house.* To search for those who were suspected of being Christians. ¶ *Haling.* Dragging, or compelling them. ¶ *Committed them to prison.* The sanhedrim had not power to put them to death. John xviii. 31. But they had power to imprison ; and they resolved, it seems, to exercise this power to the utmost. Paul frequently refers to his zeal in persecuting the church. Acts xxvi. 10, 11. Gal. i. 13.—It may be remarked here that there never was a persecution commenced with more flattering prospects to the persecutors. Saul, the principal agent, was young, zealous, learned, and clothed with power. He showed afterwards that he had talents fitted for any station ; and zeal that tired with no exertion, and that was appalled by no obstacle. With this talent he entered on his work. Christians were few and feeble. They were scattered and unarmed. They were unprotected by any civil power, and exposed, therefore, to the full blaze and rage of persecution. That the church was not destroyed, was owing to the protection of God—a protection that not only secured its existence, but which extended its influence and power by means of this very persecution far abroad on the earth.

4. *Went every where.* That is, they travelled through the various regions where they were scattered. In all places to which they came, they preached the word. ¶ *Preaching the word.* Greek, *Evangelizing*, or announcing the good news of the message of mercy, or the word of God. It is not the usual word which is rendered *preach*, but means simply announcing the good news of salvation. There is no evidence, nor is there any probability, that all these persons were *ordained* to preach. They were manifestly common Christians who were scattered by the persecution ; and the mean-

5 Then Philip ^a went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.

^a c. 6. 5.

6 And the people with one accord ^b gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing, ^c and

^b 2 Chr. 30. 12.

^c Jno. 4. 41, 42.

ing is, that they communicated to their fellow-men in conversation, wherever they met them; and probably in the synagogues, where all Jews had a right to speak, the glad tidings that the Messiah had come. It is not said that they set themselves up for public teachers; or that they administered baptism; or that they founded churches: but they proclaimed every where the news that a Saviour had come. Their hearts were full of it. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks; and they made the truth known to *all* whom they met.—We may learn from this, (1.) That persecution tends to promote the very thing which it would destroy. (2.) That one of the best means to make Christians active and zealous is to persecute them. (3.) That it is right for *all* Christians to make known the truths of the gospel. When the heart is full, the lips will speak; and there is no more impropriety in their speaking of redemption than of any thing else. (4.) It should be the great object of all Christians to make the Saviour known *every where*. By their lives, conversation, and pious exhortations and entreaties, they should beseech dying sinners to be reconciled to God. And especially should this be done when they are *travelling*. Christians when away from home seem almost to imagine that they lay aside the obligations of religion. But the example of Christ and his early disciples has taught us that this is the very time to attempt to do good.

5. *Then Philip.* One of the seven deacons. ch. vi. 5. He is afterwards called *the Evangelist*. Acts xxi. 8. ¶ *The city of Samaria.* This does not mean a city whose name was Samaria, for no such city at that time existed. Samaria was a *region*. Matt. i. 22. The ancient city Samaria, the capital of that region, had been destroyed by *Hyrcanus*, so completely as to leave no vestige of it remaining; and he “took away,” says Josephus, “the very marks that there had ever been such a city there.” (Antiq. b. xiii. ch. x. § 3.) Herod the Great afterwards built a city on this site, and called it *Sebaste*, i. e. *Augusta*, in honour of the emperor Augustus. (Jos. Antiq. b. xv. ch. viii. § 5.) Perhaps this city is intended, as being the principal city of Samaria; or possibly *Sychar*, another city where the gospel had

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been before preached by the Saviour himself. John iv. ¶ *And preached Christ.* Preached that the Messiah had come, and made known his doctrines. The same truths had been before stated in Samaria by the Saviour himself (John iv.); and this was doubtless one of the reasons why they so gladly now received the word of God. The field had been prepared by the Lord Jesus; and he had said that it was white for the harvest (John iv. 35); and into that field Philip now entered, and was signally blessed. His coming was attended with a remarkable *revival of religion*. The word translated *preach* here is not that which is used in the previous verse. This denotes to *proclaim as a crier*, and is commonly employed to denote the preaching of the gospel, so called. Mark v. 20; vii. 36. Luke viii. 39. Matt. xxiv. 14. Acts x. 42. Rom. x. 15. 1 Cor. ix. 27; xv. 12. 2 Tim. iv. 2. It has been argued that because *Philip* is said thus to have preached to the Samaritans, that *therefore* all *deacons* have a right to preach, or that they are, under the New Testament economy, an *order* of ministers. But this is by no means clear. For, (1.) It is not evident, nor can it be shown, that the *other* deacons (ch. v.) ever preached. There is no record of their doing so; and the narrative would lead us to suppose that they did not. (2.) They were *appointed* for a very different purpose (ch. vi. 1—5); and it is fair to suppose that *as deacons*, they confined themselves to the design of their appointment. (3.) It is not said that *Philip* preached in virtue of his being a *deacon*. From any thing in *this* place, it would seem that he preached as the other Christians did—wherever he was. (4.) But *elsewhere* an express distinction is made between Philip and the others. A new appellation is given him, and he is expressly called *the Evangelist*. Acts xxi. 8. From *this*, it seems that he preached, not *because* he was a *deacon*, but *because* he had received a special *appointment* to this business as an evangelist. (5.) This same office, or rank of Christian teachers, is expressly recognised elsewhere. Eph. iv. 11. All these considerations show that there is *not* in the sacred Scriptures an order of ministers appointed to preach *as deacons*.

6. *With one accord.* Unitedly, or with one mind. Great multitudes of them did it. ¶ *Gave heed.* Paid attention to; em-

seeing the miracles which he did.

7 For ^a unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed *with them*: and many taken with palsies, ^b and that were lame, ^c were healed.

8 And there was great joy in that city.

9 But there was a certain man

^a Mar. 16. 17. ^b Mar. 2. 3-11. c. 9. 33, 34. ^c Matt. 11. 5.

braced. ¶ *Hearing.* Hearing what he said.

7. *For unclean spirits.* Note, Matt. iv. 24. ¶ *Crying with loud voice.* Note, Mark i. 26. ¶ *Palsies.* Note, Matt. iv. 24.

8. *And there was great joy.* This joy arose, (1.) From the fact that so many persons, before sick and afflicted, were restored to health. (2.) From the conversion of individuals to Christ. The tendency of religion is to produce joy. (3.) From the mutual joy of *families and friends*, that their friends were converted. The tendency of a revival of religion is thus to produce great joy.

9. *But there was a certain man called Simon.* The Fathers have written much respecting this man, and have given strange accounts of him; but nothing more is certainly known of him than is stated in this place. Rosenmüller and Kuinöcl suppose him to have been a Simon mentioned by Josephus (Antiq. b. xx. ch. vii. § 2), who was born in Cyprus. He was a magician, and was employed by Felix to persuade Drusilla to forsake her husband Azizus, and to marry Felix. But it is not very probable that this was the same person. (See Note in Whiston's Josephus.) Simon Magus was probably a Jew or a Samaritan, who had addicted himself to the arts of magic, and who was much celebrated for it. He had studied philosophy in Alexandria in Egypt (Mosheim, i. p. 113, 114, *Murdock's translation*), and then lived at Samaria. After he was cut off from the hope of adding to his other powers the power of working miracles, the *fathers* say that he fell into many errors, and became the founder of the sect of the Simonians. They accused him of affirming that he came down as the *Father* in respect to the Samaritans; the *Son* in respect to the Jews; and the *Holy Spirit* in respect to the Gentiles. He did not acknowledge Christ to be the Son of God, but a rival, and pretended himself to be Christ. He rejected the law of Moses. Many other things are

called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, ^d and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out ^e that himself was some great one:

10 To whom ^f they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.

^d c. 13. 6. Re. 22. 15. ^e c. 5. 36. 2 Ti. 3. 2, 5. ^f 2 Cor. 11. 19.

affirmed of him, which rest on doubtful authority. He seems to have become an enemy to Christianity; though he was willing *then* to avail himself of some of its doctrines in order to advance his own interests. The account that he came to a tragical death in Rome; that he was honoured as a deity by the Roman senate; and that a statue was erected to his memory in the isle of Tiber, is now generally rejected. His end is not known. (See Calmet, art. *Simon Magus*, and Mosheim, i. p. 114, Note.) ¶ *Beforetime.* The practice of magic, or sorcery, was common at that time, and in all the ancient nations. ¶ *Used sorcery.* Greek, μαγεύων. Exercising the arts of the *Magi*, or *Magicians*; hence the name *Simon Magus*. See Note, Matt. ii. 1. The ancient *Magi* had their rise in Persia, and were at first addicted to the study of philosophy, astronomy, medicine, &c. This name came afterwards to signify those who made use of the knowledge of these arts for the purpose of imposing on mankind—astrologers, soothsayers, necromancers, fortune-tellers, &c. Such persons pretended to predict future events by the positions of the stars, and to cure diseases by incantations, &c. See Isa. ii. 6. See also Dan. i. 20; ii. 2. It was expressly forbidden the Jews to consult such persons on pain of death. Lev. xix. 31; xx. 6. In these arts Simon had been eminently successful. ¶ *And bewitched.* This is an unhappy translation. The Greek means merely that he *astonished* or *amazed* the people, or *confounded* their judgment. The idea of *bewitching* them is not in the original. ¶ *Giving out, &c.* *Saying*, i. e. boasting. It was in this way, partly, that he so confounded them. Jugglers generally impose on people just in proportion to the *extravagance* and *folly* of their pretensions. The same remark may be made of *quack doctors*, and of all persons who attempt to delude and impose on mankind.

10. *The great power of God.* Probably this means only that they believed that he was *invested* with the power of God,

11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched ^a them with sorceries.

12 But when they believed ^b Philip preaching the things ^c concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

13 Then Simon himself believed

^a Gal.3.1.

^b ver.37. c.2.41.

^c c.1.3.

not that they supposed he was really the Great God.

13. *Then Simon... believed also.* That is, he believed that Jesus had wrought miracles, and was raised from the dead, &c. All this he could believe in entire consistency with his own notions of the power of magic; and all that the connexion requires us to suppose is that he believed this—that Jesus had power of working miracles, &c.; and as he purposed to turn this to his own account, he was willing to profess himself to be his follower. It might have injured his popularity, moreover, if he had taken a stand when so many were professing to become Christians.—Men often profess religion because, if they do not, they fear they will lose their influence, and be left with the ungodly. That Simon was not a real Christian is apparent from the whole narrative. ver. 18. 21—23. ¶ *And when he was baptized.* He was admitted to a profession of religion in the same way as the others. Philip did not pretend to know the heart; and Simon was admitted because he *professed* his belief. This is all the evidence that ministers can have, and it is no wonder, that they, as well as Philip, are often deceived. The reasons which influenced Simon to make a profession of religion, seem to have been these: (1.) An impression that Christianity was *true*. He seems to have been convinced of this by the miracles of Philip. (2.) The fact that many others were becoming Christians; and *he* went in with the multitude. This is often the case in revivals of religion. (3.) He had no religion; but it is clear (ver. 20, 21) that he was willing to make use of Christianity to advance his own power, influence, and popularity—a thing which multitudes of men of the same mind with Simon Magus have been willing since to do. ¶ *And continued, &c.* It was customary and natural for the disciples to remain with their teachers. See ch. ii. 42. ¶ *And wondered.* This is the same word that is translated *bewitched* in ver. 9. 11. It means that he was amazed

also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles ¹ and signs which were done.

14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

¹ or, signs and great miracles.

that Philip could *really* perform so much greater miracles than *he* had even pretended to.—Hypocrites will sometimes be greatly attentive to the external duties of religion, and will be greatly surprised at what is done by God for the salvation of sinners. ¶ *Miracles and signs.* Greek, Signs and great powers, or great miracles. That is, so much greater than he *pretended* to be able to perform.

14. *They sent.* That is, the apostles *deputed* two of their number. This shows conclusively that there was no *chief* or *ruler* among them. They acted as being equal in authority. The reason why they sent them was, probably, that there would be a demand for more labour than Philip could render; a church was to be founded, which required their presence; and it was important that they should be present to organize it, and to build it up. The *harvest* had occurred in Samaria, of which the Saviour spoke (John iv. 35), and it was proper that they should enter into it.—In times of revival there is often more to be done than can be done by the regular pastor of a people, and it is proper that he should be aided from abroad. ¶ *Peter.* This shows that *Peter* had no such authority and primacy as the Roman Catholics claim for him. He exercised no authority of *sending* others, but was himself *sent*. He was appointed by *their* united voice, instead of claiming the power himself of directing *them*. ¶ *And John.* Peter was ardent, bold, zealous, rash; John was mild, gentle, tender, persuasive. There was wisdom in uniting them in this work, as the talents of both were needed; and the excellencies in the character of the one would compensate for the defects of the other. It is observable that the apostles sent *two* together, as the Saviour had himself done. See Note, Mark vi. 7. The reasons why this additional aid was sent to Samaria were probably these: (1.) To assist Philip in a great work—in the *harvest* which he was there collecting. (2.) To give the *sanction* of the authority of the apostles to

15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

16 For as yet ^a he was fallen upon none of them; only they were ^b baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

a c.19.2.

b c.2.38; 10.48; 19.5,6. 1Cor.1.13.

what he was doing. (3.) To confer on the converts the gift of the Holy Ghost. ver. 17.

15. *Were come down.* To Samaria. Jerusalem was generally represented as up, or higher than the rest of the land. Matt. xx 18. John vii. 8. ¶ *Prayed for them.* They sought at the hand of God the extraordinary communications of the Holy Spirit. They did not even pretend to have the power of doing it without the aid of God. ¶ *That they might receive the Holy Ghost.* The main question here is, what was meant by the Holy Ghost? In ver. 20, it is called "the gift of God." The following remarks may make this plain. (1.) It was not that gift of the Holy Ghost by which the soul is converted, or renewed, for they had this when they believed. ver. 6. Every where the conversion of the sinner is traced to his influence. Comp. John i. 13. (2.) It was not the ordinary influences of the Spirit by which the soul is sanctified; for sanctification is a progressive work, and this was sudden: sanctification is shown by the general tenor of the life; this was sudden and striking. (3.) It was something that was discernible by external effects; for Simon saw (ver. 18), that this was done by the laying on of hands. (4.) The phrase 'the gift of the Holy Ghost,' and 'the descent of the Holy Ghost,' signified not merely his ordinary influences in converting sinners, but those extraordinary influences that attended the first preaching of the gospel—the power of speaking with new tongues (ch. ii.), the power of working miracles, &c. Acts xix. 6. (5.) This is further clear from the fact that Simon wished to purchase this power, evidently to keep up his influence among the people, and to retain his ascendancy as a juggler and sorcerer. But surely, Simon would not wish to purchase the converting and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit; it was the power of working miracles. These things make it clear that by the gift of the Holy Spirit here is meant the power of speaking with new tongues (comp. 1 Cor. xiv.) and the power of miracles. And it is further clear

17 Then laid ^c they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

18 And when Simon saw, that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them, ^d money,

c c.6.6. He.6.2.

d 1Tim.6.6.

that this passage should not be adduced in favour of "the rite of confirmation" in the Christian church. For besides the fact that there are now no apostles, the thing spoken of here, is entirely different from that of the rite of confirmation. This was to confer the extraordinary power of working miracles; that is for a different purpose.

If it be asked why this power was conferred on the early Christians, it may be replied, that it was to furnish striking proof of the truth of the Christian religion; to impress the people, and thus to win them to embrace the gospel. The early church was thus armed with the power of the Holy Spirit; and this extraordinary attestation of God to his message was one cause of the rapid propagation and permanent establishment of the gospel.

16. *He was fallen.* This expression is several times applied to the Holy Spirit. ch. x. 44; xi. 15. It does not differ materially from the common expression, "the Holy Ghost descended." It means that he came from heaven; and the expression *to fall*, applied to his influences, denotes the rapidity and suddenness of his coming. Comp. ch. xix. 2. ¶ *In the name of the Lord Jesus.* Note, ch. ii. 38. See also ch. x. 48; xix. 5, 6.

17. *Then laid they their hands, &c.* This was an act of prayer, expressing an invocation to God that he would impart the blessing to them. On how many they laid their hands, is not said. It is evident that it was not on all, for they did not thus lay hands on Simon. Perhaps it was done on a few of the more prominent and leading persons, who were to be employed particularly in bearing witness to the truth of the gospel. It was customary to lay the hands on any person when a favour was to be conferred, or a blessing imparted. See Note, Matt. ix. 18.

18. *Simon saw, &c.* That is, he witnessed the extraordinary effects, the power of speaking in a miraculous manner, &c. Note, ver. 15. ¶ *He offered them money.* He had had a remarkable influence over the Samaritans, and he saw that the pos-

19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because ^a

^a 2Ki.5.15,16. Matt.10.8.

^b c.10.45; 11.17.

session of this power would perpetuate and increase his influence. Men commonly employ the tricks of legerdemain for the purpose of making money; and it seems probable that such had been the design of Simon. He saw that if he could communicate to *others* this power, if he could confer on *them* the talent of speaking other languages, it might be turned to vast account, and he sought therefore to purchase it of the apostles. From this act of Simon we have derived our word *simony*, to denote the buying and selling of ecclesiastical preferment, or church offices, where religion is supported by the state. This act of Simon shows conclusively that he was influenced by improper motives in becoming connected with the church.

20. *Thy money perish with thee.* This is an expression of the horror and indignation of Peter at the base offer of Simon. It is not to be understood as an imprecation on Simon. The main idea is the apostle's contempt for the *money*, as if he regarded it as of no value. 'Let your money go to destruction. We abhor your impious offer. We can freely see any amount of money destroyed before we will be tempted to *sell* the gift of the Holy Ghost.' But there was here also an expression of his belief that *Simon* also would perish. It was a declaration that he was hastening to ruin, and *as if* this was certain, Peter says, let your money perish too. ¶ *The gift of God.* That which he has *given*, or conferred as a favour. The idea was *absurd* that that which God himself *gives* as a sovereign, could be purchased. It was *impious* to think of attempting to buy with worthless gold that which was of so inestimable value. The *gift of God* here means the extraordinary influences of the Holy Ghost. ch. x. 45; xi. 17. How can we pay a *price* to God? All that *we* can give, the silver, and the gold, and the cattle on a thousand hills, belong to him already. We have *nothing* which we can present for his favours. And yet there are many who seek to *purchase* the favour of God. Some do it by alms and prayers; some by penance and fasting; some by attempting to make their own hearts better, and by self-right-

thou hast thought that the gift ^b of God may be purchased with money.

21 Thou hast neither part ^c nor lot in this matter: for ^d thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

^c Jos.22.25.

^d Ps.78.36,37. Eze.14.3.

eousness; and some by penitence and tears. All these will not *purchase* his favour. Salvation, like every other blessing, will be *his gift*; and if ever received, we must be willing to accept it on his own terms; at his own time; and in his own way. We are without merit; and if saved, it will be by the sovereign grace of God.

21. *Neither part.* You have no *portion* of the grace of God; that is, you are destitute of it altogether. This word commonly denotes the *part* of an inheritance which falls to one when it is divided. ¶ *Nor lot.* This word means properly a portion which *falls* to one when an estate, or when spoil in war is divided into portions, according to the number of those who are to be partakers, and the part of each one is determined by *lot*. The two words denote *emphatically* that he was in no sense a partaker of the favour of God. ¶ *In this matter.* Greek, In this word, i. e. thing. That which is referred to here is the religion of Christ. He was not a Christian. It is remarkable that Peter judged him so soon, and when he had seen but *one* act of his. But it was an act which satisfied him that he was a stranger to religion. One act may sometimes bring out the *whole character*; it may evince the *governing motives*; it may show traits of character utterly *inconsistent* with true religion; and then it is as certain a criterion as any long series of acts. ¶ *Thy heart.* Your *affections*, or *governing motives*; your principle of conduct. Comp. 2 Kings x. 15. You love gold and popularity, and not the gospel for what it is. There is no evidence here that Peter saw this in a miraculous manner, or by any supernatural influence. It was apparent and plain, that Simon was not influenced by the pure, disinterested motives of the gospel, but by the love of power and of the world. ¶ *In the sight of God.* That is, God *sees* or *judges* that your heart is not sincere and pure.—No external profession is acceptable without the heart. Reader, is *your heart* right with God? Are your motives pure; and does *God* see there the exercise of holy, sincere, and benevolent affections towards him? God *knows* the motives; and with

22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness; and pray God, if^a perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee:

^a Dan. 4.27. 2Tim. 2.25.

unerring certainty he will judge; and with unerring justice he will fix our doom, according to the affections of the heart.

22. *Repent, therefore.* Here we may remark, (1.) That Simon was at this time an unconverted sinner. (2.) That the command was given to him *as such*. (3.) That he was required to *do the thing*; not to wait or seek merely, but actually to repent. (4.) That this was to be the *first step* in his conversion. He was not even directed to *pray* first; but his first indispensable work was to *repent*, that is, to exercise proper sorrow for this sin, and to *abandon* his plan or principle of action. And this shows, (1.) That *all* sinners are to be exhorted to *repent*, as their first work. They are *not* to be told to *wait*, and *read*, and *pray*, in the expectation that repentance will be *given* them. With such helps as they can obtain, they are to *do the thing*. (2.) Prayer will not be acceptable, or heard, unless the sinner comes *repenting*, that is, unless he regrets his sin, and *desires* to forsake it. Then, and then only, will he be heard. When he comes *loving* his sins, and resolving still to practise them, God will not hear him. When he comes *desirous* of forsaking them, grieved that he is guilty, and *feeling* his need of help, God will hear his prayer. See Isa. i. 15. Mic. iii. 4. Prov. i. 28. Ps. lxi. 18. ¶ *And pray God.* Having a *desire* to forsake the sin, and to be pardoned, *then* pray to God to forgive. It would be absurd to ask forgiveness until a man felt his need of it. This shows that a sinner *ought* to pray, and *how* he ought to do it. It should be with a desire and purpose to forsake sin, and in that state of mind God will hear the prayer. Comp. Dan. iv. 27. ¶ *If perhaps.* There was no certainty that God would forgive him; nor is there any evidence either that Simon prayed, or that he was forgiven.—This direction of Peter presents *another* important principle in regard to the conduct of sinners. They are to be directed to repent, not *because* they have the promise of forgiveness, and not *because* they *hope* to be forgiven, but *because* sin is a *great evil*, and *because* it is *right* and *proper* that they should repent, whether they are forgiven or not. That is to be left to the sovereign mercy of

23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness,^b and in the bond^c of iniquity.

^b Jer. 4.18. Heb. 12.15.

^c Ps. 116.16. Prov. 5.22

Isa. 28.22.

God: *They* are to repent of sin, and—then they are to feel, not that they have any *claim* on God, but that they are dependent on him, and must be saved or lost at his will. They are not to suppose that their tears will *purchase* forgiveness, but that they lie at the foot of mercy, and that there is *hope*—not certainty—that God will forgive. The language of the humbled sinner is,

"Perhaps he will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer;
But if I perish I will pray,
And perish only there.

"I can but perish if I go,
I am resolv'd to try,
For if I stay away, I know
I shall for ever die."

¶ *The thought, &c.* Your *purpose*, or *wish*. *Thoughts* may be, therefore, evil, and need forgiveness. It is not open sin only that needs to be pardoned; it is the secret purpose of the soul.

23. *For I perceive.* That is, by the act which he had done. His offer had shown a state of mind that was wholly inconsistent with true religion. One single sin *may* as certainly show that there is no true piety as *many* acts of iniquity. It may be so decided, so malignant, so utterly inconsistent with just views, as at once to determine what the character is. The sin of Simon was of this character. Peter here does not appear to have claimed the power of judging the *heart*; but he judged, as all other men would, by the act. ¶ *In the gall.* This word denotes properly *bile*, or that bitter, yellowish-green fluid that is secreted in the liver. Hence it means any thing very bitter; and also any bad passion of the mind, as anger, malice, &c. We speak of *bitterness* of mind, &c. ¶ *Of bitterness.* This is a Hebraism; the usual mode of expressing the *superlative*, and means *excessive bitterness*. The phrase is used respecting *idolatry* (Deut. xxix. 18), "Lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood." A similar expression occurs in Heb. xii. 15, "Lest any root of bitterness springing up, trouble you," &c. *Sin* is thus represented as a *bitter* or poisonous thing; a thing not only *unpleasant* in its consequences, but ruinous in its character, as a poisonous plant would be in the midst of other plants. Jer. ii. 19, "It is an

24 Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ^a ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.

25 And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and

^a Ex.8.8. Nu.21.7. 1Ki.13.6. Job 42.8. Ja.5.16.

evil and *bitter* thing that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God." iv. 18. Rom. iii. 14, "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." Eph. iv. 31. The meaning here is, that the heart of Simon was full of dreadful, malignant sin. ¶ *Bond of iniquity*. Or, that thou art *bound by iniquity*. That is, that it has the *rule* over you, and *binds* you as a slave. Sin is often thus represented as *bondage* and *captivity*. Sinners are represented as chained to it, and kept in hard servitude. Ps. cxvi. 16. Prov. v. 22, "He shall be holden with the cords of his sins." Rom. vii. 23, 24. These expressions prove conclusively that Simon was a stranger to religion.

24. *Pray ye, &c.* Here remark, (1.) That Simon was directed to pray for himself (ver. 22), but he had no disposition to do that. Sinners will often ask others to pray for them, when they are too proud, or too much in love with sin, to pray for themselves. (2.) The main thing that Peter wished to impress on him was a sense of his *sin*. Simon did not regard this, but looked only to the *punishment*. He was terrified and alarmed; and he sought to avoid future punishment; but he had no alarm about his *sins*. So it is often with sinners. So it was with Pharaoh (Ex. viii. 28. 32), and with Jeroboam (1 Kings xiii. 6). And so sinners often quiet their own consciences by asking ministers and Christian friends to pray for them, while *they* still purpose to persevere in iniquity. If men expect to be saved, they must pray *for themselves*; and pray not chiefly to be freed from *punishment*, but from the *sin which deserves hell*.—This is all that we hear of Simon in the New Testament; and the probability is, that, like many other sinners, he did *not* pray for himself, but continued to live in the gall of bitterness, and died in the bond of iniquity. The testimony of antiquity is decided on that point. See Note, ver. 9.

25. *In many villages, &c.* They went at first directly to the *city* of Samaria. On their return to Jerusalem, they travelled more at leisure, and preached in the vil-

lages of the Samaritans.

26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza ^b which is desert.

^b Jos.15.47.

lages also—a good example for the ministers of the gospel, and for all Christians, when travelling from place to place.—The reason why they returned to Jerusalem, and made that their permanent abode, might have been, that it was important to bear witness to the resurrection of Christ in the very city where he had been crucified, and where his resurrection had occurred. If the doctrine was established *there*, it would be more easy to establish it elsewhere.

26. *And the angel of the Lord.* The word *angel* is used in the Scriptures in a great variety of significations. See Note, Matt. i. 20. Here it has been supposed by some to mean literally a celestial messenger sent from God; others have supposed that it means *a dream*, others *a vision*, &c. The word properly means *a messenger*; and all that it can be shown to signify here is, that the Lord sent a *message* to Philip of this kind. It is most probable, I think, that the passage means that God communicated the message by his Spirit; for in ver. 29, 39, it is expressly said that *the Spirit* spake to Philip, &c. Thus in Acts xvi. 7, the *Spirit* is said to have forbidden Paul to preach in Bythania; and in ver. 9, the message on the subject is said to have been conveyed in *a vision*. There is no absurdity, however, in supposing that an *angel* literally was employed to communicate this message to Philip. See Heb. i. 14. Gen. xix. 1; xxii. 11. Judg. vi. 12. ¶ *Spake unto Philip*. Comp. Matt. ii. 13. ¶ *Arise*. See Note, Luke xv. 18. ¶ *And go, &c.* Philip had been employed in Samaria. As God now intended to send the gospel to another place, he gave a special direction to Philip to go and convey it. It is evident that God designed the *conversion* of this eunuch; and the direction to Philip shows *how* he accomplishes his designs. It is not by miracle, but by the use of means. It is not by direct power without *truth*, but it is by a message fitted to the end. The salvation of a single sinner is an object worthy the attention of God. When such a sinner is converted, it is because God forms a *plan* or *purpose* to do it. When it is done, he

27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, ^a an ^b eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians,

^a Zeph. 3. 10.

^b Isa. 56. 3-5.

inclines his servants to labour; he directs their labours; he leads his ministers; and he prepares the way (ver. 28) for the reception of the truth. ¶ *Toward the south.* That is, south of Samaria, where Philip was then labouring. ¶ *Unto Gaza.* Gaza, or AZZAH (Gen. x. 19), was a city of the Philistines, given by Joshua to Judah (Josh. xv. 47. 1 Sam. vi. 17). It was one of the *five* principal cities of the Philistines. It was formerly a large place; was situated on an eminence, and commanded a beautiful prospect. It was in this place that Samson took away the gates of the city, and bore them off. Judg. xv. 2, 3. It was near Askelon, about sixty miles southwest from Jerusalem. ¶ *Which is desert.* This may refer either to the *way* or to the *place*. The natural construction is the latter. In explanation of this, it is to be observed that there were *two* towns of that name, Old and New Gaza. The prophet Zephaniah (ii. 4) said that *Gaza* should be *forsaken*, i. e. destroyed. "This was partly accomplished by Alexander the Great. (Jos. Antiq. b. xi. ch. viii. § 3, 4; b. xiii. ch. xiii. § 3.) Another town was afterwards built of the same name, but at some distance from the former; and Old Gaza was abandoned to desolation. Strabo mentions 'Gaza the desert,' and Diodorus Siculus speaks of 'Old Gaza.' " (*Robin. Calmet.*) Some have supposed, however, that Luke refers here to the *road* leading to Gaza, as being desolate and uninhabited. But I regard the former interpretation as most natural and obvious. "In this place, in 1823, the American missionaries, Messrs. Fisk and King, found Gaza, a town built of stone, making a very mean appearance, and containing about five thousand inhabitants." (*Hall on the Acts.*)

27. *A man of Ethiopia.* Gaza was near the confines between Palestine and Egypt. It was in the direct road from Jerusalem to Egypt. *Ethiopia* was one of the great kingdoms of Africa, part of which is now called Abyssinia. It is frequently mentioned in Scripture under the name of *Cush*. But *Cush* comprehended a much larger region, including the southern part of Arabia, and even sometimes the countries adjacent to the Tigris and Euphrates. Ethiopia proper lay south of Egypt, in the Nile, and was bounded north by

who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come ^c to Jerusalem for to worship,

28 Was returning; and, sitting

^c 2Chr. 6. 32, 33.

Egypt, that is, by the cataracts near Syene; east by the Red sea, and perhaps part by the Indian Ocean; south by unknown regions in the interior of Africa; and west by Lybia and the deserts. It comprehended the modern kingdoms of Nubia or Sennaar, and Abyssinia. The chief city in it was the ancient Meroë, situated on the island or tract of the same name, between the Nile and Ashtaboras, not far from the modern Shendi. (*Robin. Calmet.*) ¶ *An eunuch, &c.* See Note, Matt. xix. 12. Eunuchs were commonly employed in attendance on the females of the harem; but the word is often used to denote any confidential officer, or counsellor of state. It is evidently so used here. ¶ *Of great authority.* Of high rank; an officer of the court. It is clear from what follows that this man was a Jew. But it is known that *Jews* were often raised to posts of high honour and distinction in foreign courts, as in the case of Joseph in Egypt, and of Daniel in Babylon. ¶ *Under Candace, &c.* Candace is said to have been the common name of the queens of Ethiopia, as *Pharaoh* was of the sovereigns of Egypt. This is expressly stated by Pliny. (Nat. Hist. vii. 29.) His words are, "The edifices of the city were few; a woman reigned there of the name of CANDACE, which name had been transmitted to these queens for many years." Strabo mentions also a queen of Ethiopia of the name of Candace. Speaking of an insurrection against the Romans, he says, "Among these were the officers of queen CANDACE, who in our days reigned over the Ethiopians." As this could not have been the Candace mentioned here, it is plain that the name was common to these queens—a sort of royal title. She was probably queen of Meroë, an important part of Ethiopia. (Bruce's Travels, vol. ii. p. 431—Clarke.) ¶ *Who had the charge, &c.* The treasurer was an officer of high trust and responsibility. ¶ *And had come, &c.* This proves that he was a Jew, or at least a Jewish proselyte. It was customary for the Jews in foreign lands, as far as practicable, to attend the great feasts at Jerusalem. He had gone up to attend the Passover, &c. See Note, ch. ii. 5.

28. *And sitting in his chariot.* His carriage; his vehicle. The form of the car-

in his chariot, read Esaias the prophet.

29 Then ^a the Spirit said unto

^a Isa. 65.24. Hos. 6.3.

riage is not known. In some instances the carriages of the ancients were placed on wheels; in others, were borne on poles in the form of a *litter* or palanquin, by men, or mules, or horses. (See Calmet, art. *Chariot*.) ¶ *Reading Esaias, &c.* Isaiah. Reading doubtless the translation of Isaiah called the Septuagint. This translation was made in Egypt, for the special use of the Jews in Alexandria and throughout Egypt, and was that which was commonly used. *Why* he was reading the Scriptures, and especially this prophet, is not certainly known. It is morally certain, however, that he was in Judea at the time of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus; that he had heard much of him; that this would be a subject of discussion; and it was natural for him, in returning, to look at the prophecies respecting the Messiah, perhaps either to meditate on them as a suitable subject of inquiry and thought, or perhaps to examine the claims of Jesus of Nazareth to this office. The prophecy in Isa. liii. was so striking, and coincided so clearly with the character of Jesus, that it was natural for a candid mind to examine whether *he* might not be the person intended by the prophet.—On this narrative we may remark, (1.) It is a proper and profitable employment on returning from *worship* to examine the sacred Scriptures. (2.) It is well to be in the habit of reading the Scriptures when we are on a journey. It may serve to keep the heart from worldly objects, and secure the affections for God. (3.) It is well at *all* times to read the Bible. It is one of the means of grace. And it is when we are searching his will, that we obtain light and comfort. The sinner should examine with a candid mind the sacred volume. It may be the means of conducting him in the true path of salvation. (4.) God often gives us light in regard to the meaning of the Bible in unexpected modes. How little did this eunuch expect to be enlightened in the manner in which he actually was. Yet God, who intended to instruct and save him, sent the living teacher, and opened to him the sacred scriptures, and led him to the Saviour. It is probable (ver. 30) that he was reading it aloud.

29. *The Spirit.* See Note, ver. 26. The Holy Spirit is here evidently intended. The thought in Philip's mind is here

Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

30 And Philip ran thither to *him*,

traced to his suggestion. All good thoughts and designs have the same origin. ¶ *Join thyself.* Join him in his chariot. Go and sit with him.

30. *And Philip ran, &c.* Indicating his haste, and his desire to obey the suggestions of the Spirit. A thousand difficulties might have been started in the mind of Philip if he had reflected a little. The eunuch was a stranger; he had the appearance of a man of rank; he was engaged in reading; he might be indisposed to be interrupted or to converse, &c. But Philip obeyed without any hesitation the monitions of the Spirit, and *ran* to him.—It is well to follow the *first* suggestions of the Spirit; to yield to the clear indications of duty, and to perform it *at once*. Especially in a deed of benevolence, and in conversing with others on the subject of religion, our *first* thoughts are commonly safest and best. If we do not follow them, the calculations of avarice, or fear, or some worldly prudence, are very apt to come in. We become alarmed; we are afraid of the rich and the great; and we suppose that our conversation and admonitions will be unacceptable.—We may learn from this case, (1.) To do our duty at once, without hesitation or debate. (2.) We shall often be disappointed in regard to subjects of this kind. We shall find candid, humble, Christian conversation far more acceptable to strangers, to the rich, and to the great, than we commonly suppose. If, as in this case, they are *alone*; if we approach them kindly; if we do not rudely and harshly address them, we shall find most men willing to talk on the subject of religion. I have conversed with some hundreds of persons on the subject of religion, and do not now recollect but *two* instances in which I was rudely treated, and in which it was not easy to gain a respectful and kind attention to Christian conversation. ¶ *And heard him read.* He was reading *loud*—sometimes the best way of impressing truth on the mind in our private reading the Scriptures. ¶ *And said, &c.* This question, there might have been reason to fear, would not be kindly received. But the eunuch's mind was in such a state that he took no offence from such an inquiry, though made by a footman, and a stranger. He doubtless recognised him as a brother Jew.—It is an important

and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest^a thou what thou readest?

31 And he said, How^b can I, except some man should guide^c me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

32 The place of the scripture

^a Matt. 13, 23, 51. ^b Ep. 5, 17. ^c Ro. 10, 14. ^c Ps. 25, 9.

question to ask ourselves when we read the sacred Scriptures.

31. *And he said, &c.* This was a *general* acknowledgment of his need of direction. It evinced a humble state of mind. It was an acknowledgment, also, originating probably from this particular passage which he was reading. He did not understand how it could be applied to the Messiah; how the description of his humiliation and condemnation (ver. 33) could be reconciled to the prevalent ideas of his being a prince and a conqueror. The same sentiment is expressed by Paul in Rom. x. 14. The circumstances, the state of mind in the eunuch, and the result, strongly remind one of the declaration in Ps. xxv. 9, "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way." ¶ *And he desired, &c.* He was willing to receive instruction even from a stranger.—The rich and the great may often receive valuable instruction from a stranger, and from a poor, unknown man.

32. *The place, &c.* Isa. liii. 7, 8. ¶ *He was led, &c.* This quotation is taken literally from the Septuagint. It varies very little from the Hebrew. It has been almost universally understood that this place refers to the Messiah; and Philip expressly applies it to him. The word "was led" (ἡγήθη) implies that he was conducted by others; that he was led as a sheep is led to be killed. The general idea is that of *meekness* and *submission* when he was led to be put to death; a description that applies in a very striking manner to the Lord Jesus. ¶ *To the slaughter.* To be killed. The characteristic here recorded is more remarkable in the sheep than in any other animals. ¶ *And like a lamb dumb, &c.* Still, patient, unresisting. ¶ *So he opened not his mouth.* He did not complain, or murmur; he offered no resistance, but yielded patiently to what was done by others.

33. *In his humiliation.* This varies from the Hebrew, but is copied exactly from the Septuagint, showing that he was reading the Septuagint. The Hebrew is

which he read was this,^d He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

^d Isa. 53, 7, 8.

"he was taken from prison, and from judgment." The word rendered "prison" denotes any kind of *detention*, or even oppression. It does not mean, as with us, to be confined in a prison or jail, but may mean *custody*, and be applied to the detention or custody of the Saviour when his hands were bound, and he was led to be tried. Note, Matt. xxvii. 2. It is not known why the LXX. thus translated the expression "he was taken from prison," &c. by "in his humiliation," &c. The word "from prison" may mean, as has been remarked, however, from *oppression*, and this does not differ materially from *humiliation*; and in this sense the LXX. understood it. The *meaning* of the expression in the Septuagint and the Acts is clear. It denotes that in his state of oppression and calamity, when he was destitute of protectors and friends, when at the *lowest* state of his humiliation, and, therefore, most the object of pity, that in *addition to that*, justice was denied him; his judgment—a just sentence—was taken away, or withheld, and he was delivered to be put to death. His deep humiliation and friendless state was followed by an unjust and cruel condemnation, when no one would stand forth to plead his cause. Every circumstance thus goes to deepen the view of his sufferings. ¶ *His judgment.* Justice, a just sentence, was denied him, and he was cruelly condemned. ¶ *And who shall declare his generation?* The word *generation* used here, properly denotes *posterity*; then an *age* of mankind, comprehending about thirty years, as we speak of this and the next generation; then it denotes *the men* of a particular age or time. Very various interpretations have been given of this expression. Lowth translates it, "his manner of life who would declare?" referring, as he supposes, to the fact that when a prisoner was condemned and led to execution, it was customary for a proclamation to be made by a crier in these words, "Whoever knows any thing about his innocence, let him come and declare it." This passage is taken from the Gemara

34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of

whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

of Babylon. (*Kennicott, as quoted by Lowth.*) The same Gemara of Babylon on this passage adds, "that before the death of Jesus, this proclamation was made forty days; but no defence could be found"—a manifest falsehood; and a story strikingly illustrative of the character of the Jewish writings. The Gemara was written sometime after Christ, perhaps not far from the year 180 (*Lardner*), and is a collection of commentaries on the traditional laws of the Jews. That this custom existed is very probable; but it is certain that no such thing was done on the trial of the Saviour. But instances are wanting where the word "generation" has this meaning. The Chaldee paraphrase translates the passage in Isaiah, "He shall collect our captivity from infirmities and vengeance; and who can declare what wonderful things shall be done for us in his days?" Others have referred this question to his Deity, or divine *generation*; intimating that no one could explain the mystery of his eternal generation. But the word in the Scriptures has no such signification; and such a sense would not suit the connexion. (See Calvin in loco.) Others have referred it to *his own spiritual posterity*, his disciples, his family; 'the number of his friends and followers who could enumerate' (*Calvin, Beza, &c.*) But this as little suits the connexion. Another sense which the word has, is to denote *the men* of any particular age or time. Matt. xi. 16; xxiii. 36. Luke xvi. 8, &c. And it has been supposed that the question here means, 'Who can describe the character and wickedness of the generation when he shall live—the enormous crime of that age, in putting him to death?' This, perhaps, is the most probable interpretation of the question, for these reasons: (1.) It is the most *usual* signification of the word (see Schleusner), and would be its obvious meaning in any other connexion. (2.) It suits the connexion here. For the prophet *immediately* adds as a *reason* for the fact that no one can describe that generation, that he was *put to death*—a deed so enormous, as to make it *impossible to describe* the wickedness of the generation that would do it. This was the sum, the crowning act of human guilt—a deed so enormous as to defy all attempt at description. The murder of the Messiah; the crucifixion of the Son of God; the killing of the highest messenger that

heaven could send, was the consummation of all earthly wickedness. There was no other deed so enormous that could be performed; and there were no words to describe this. The same thing is implied in what the Saviour himself said (Matt. xxiii. 37, 38, and Luke xiii. 34, 35; xix. 42), "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," &c. The idea in these places is, that notwithstanding their sin in killing the prophets, and stoning those that had been sent to them, he would *still* have been willing to receive and pardon them, but for this enormous act of wickedness in putting the Messiah to death—a deed which they were *about* to accomplish, and which should be attended with the destruction of their state and nation. The Hebrew word "*declare*" (Isa. liii. 8), means properly to *meditate*, to *think of*, and then, to *speak*, to *declare*. It means probably in that place, 'Who can think of, who can conceive the enormity of the crimes of that age, so as fully to publish or declare them.' † *For his life, &c.* This is the *act* of wickedness just referred to—putting the Messiah to death. The Hebrew is, "For he was cut off from the land of the living," i. e. he was put to death. The expression used in the Acts was taken from the Septuagint, and means substantially the same as the Hebrew.

34. Answered Philip. That is, addressed Philip. The Hebrews often use the word *answer* as synonymous with addressing one, whether he had spoken or not. † *Of himself, &c.* This was a natural inquiry, for there was nothing in the text itself that would determine expressly to whom the reference was. The ancient Jews expressly applied the passage to the Messiah. Thus the Targum of Jonathan on Isa. lii. 13, "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently," &c., renders it, "Behold, my servant, the Messiah, shall be prospered," &c. But we should remember that the eunuch was probably not deeply versed in the Scriptures. We should remember, further, that he had just been at Jerusalem, and that the public mind was agitated about the proceedings of the sanhedrim in putting Jesus of Nazareth, who claimed to be the Messiah, to death. It is by no means improbable that *this* passage had been urged as a proof that he was the Messiah; and that the Jews, to evade the force of it, had maintained that it referred to Isaiah or Jeremiah—as they have since done. Yet the subject was so

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began ^a at the same scripture, and ^b preached unto him Jesus.

36 And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here*

a Lu.24.27.

b c.18.28.

c c.10.47.

important and so difficult, that it had occupied the attention of the traveller during his journey; and his question shows that he had been deeply pondering the inquiry whether it *could* refer to Isaiah, or whether it must have reference to the Messiah. In this state of suspense and agitation, when his mind was just fitted to receive instruction, God sent a messenger to guide him.—He often thus prepares, by his providence, or by a train of affecting and solemn events, the minds of men for a reception of the truth; and then he sends his messengers to guide the mind thoughtful and anxious, in the way of peace and salvation.

35. *Opened his mouth.* See Note, Matt. v. 2. ¶ *At the same scripture.* Taking this as a *text* to be illustrated. ¶ *Preached unto him Jesus.* Showed him that Jesus of Nazareth exactly answered to the description of the prophet; and that therefore the prophet referred to the Messiah, and that that Messiah was Jesus of Nazareth. How far Philip detailed the circumstances of the life and death of Christ is unknown. What follows shows also that he stated the design of baptism, and the duty of being baptized.

36. *As they went on their way.* In their journey. ¶ *A certain water.* The expression used here does not determine whether this was a river, a brook, or a pond or standing pool. And there are no circumstances to determine that. It is well known, however, that there is no large river, or very considerable stream in this vicinity. All that is intimated is, that there was water enough to perform the rite of baptism, whether that was by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. It must be admitted, I think, that there might have been water enough for either. Grotius says they came "*to a fountain* which was in the neighbourhood of *Bethsora*, in the tribe of *Juda*, at the twentieth milestone from *Ælia (Jerusalem)* to *Hebron*." This is, however, a tradition taken from *Eusebius*. The place is still shown. (*Pocock*.) ¶ *What doth hinder me, &c.* This shows that he had been instructed by Philip in the nature

is water; what doth ^c hinder me to be baptized?

37 And Philip said, If ^d thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I ^e believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

d Mar.16.16.c.8.12.

e Jno.11.27. 1Cor.12.3. 1Jno.4.15.

and design of baptism. It evinces also a purpose at *once* to give himself to Christ, to profess his name, and to be dedicated to his service. ¶ *To be baptized.* On the meaning of the word *baptize*, see Note, Matt. iii. 6.

37. *And Philip said, &c.* This was then stated to be the proper qualification for making a profession of religion. The terms are, (1.) *Faith*, that is, a reception of Jesus as a Saviour; yielding the mind to the proper influences of the truths of redemption. See Note, Mark xvi. 16. (2.) There is required not merely the assent of the understanding, but a surrender of the heart, the will, the affections, to the truth of the gospel. As these were the proper qualifications then, so they are now. Nothing less is required; and nothing but this can constitute a proper qualification for the Lord's supper. ¶ *I believe, &c.* This profession is more than a professed belief that Jesus was the Messiah. The name *Christ* implies that. 'I believe that *Jesus the Messiah*' is, &c. In addition to this, he professed his belief that he was the *Son of God*—showing either that he had before supposed that the Messiah *would be* the Son of God, or that Philip had instructed him on that point. It was natural for Philip in discoursing on the humiliation and poverty of Jesus, to add also that he sustained a higher rank of being than a man, and was the Son of God. What precise ideas the eunuch attached to this expression cannot be now determined. This verse is wanting in a very large number of manuscripts (*Mill*), and has been rejected by many of the ablest critics. It is also omitted in the Syriac and Ethiopic versions. It is not easy to conceive why it has been omitted in almost all the Greek MSS. unless it is spurious. If it was not in the original copy of the Acts, it was probably inserted by some early transcriber, and was deemed so important to the connexion, to show that the eunuch was not admitted hastily to baptism, that it was afterwards retained. It contains, however, an important truth, elsewhere abundantly taught in the Scriptures, that *faith* is ne-

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still : and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch ; and he baptized him.

necessary to a proper profession of religion.

38. *And they went down both into the water.* This passage has been made the subject of much discussion on the subject of baptism. It has been adduced in proof of the necessity of immersion. It is not proposed to enter into that subject here. See Note, Matt. iii. 6. It may be remarked here that the preposition *εἰς*, translated here "into," does not of necessity mean that. Its meaning would be as well expressed by "to" or "unto," or as we should say, 'they went to the water,' without meaning to determine whether they went *into* it or not. Out of *twenty-six* significations which Schleusner has given the word, this is one. John xi. 38, "Jesus therefore groaning in himself, cometh *to* (*εἰς*) the grave"—assuredly not *into* the grave. Luke xi. 49, "I send them prophets"—Greek, 'I send *to* (*εἰς*) them prophets'—*to* them, not *into* them. Comp. Rom. ii. 4. 1 Cor. xiv. 36. Matt. xii. 41, "They repented *at* (*εἰς*) the preaching of Jonas"—not *into* his preaching. John iv. 5, "Then cometh he *to* (*εἰς*) a city of Samaria," that is, *near to it*, for the context shows that he had not yet entered *into* it. Comp. ver. 6. 8. John xxi. 4, "Jesus stood *on* (*εἰς*) the shore," that is, not *in*, but *near* the shore. These passages show that the word does not necessarily mean that they entered *into* the water. But (2.) If it did, it does not necessarily follow that the eunuch was immersed. There might be various ways of baptizing, even after they were *in* the water, besides immersing. Sprinkling or pouring might be performed there as well as elsewhere. (3.) It is incumbent on those who maintain that *immersion* is the *only* valid mode of baptism, to prove that this passage cannot *possibly* mean any thing else, and that there was no other mode practised by the apostles. (4.) It would be still incumbent to show that *if* this were the common and even the only mode then, in a warm climate, &c. that it is indispensable that this mode should be practised every where else. No such positive command can be adduced. And it follows, therefore, that it cannot be proved that immersion is the only lawful mode of baptism. See Note, Matt. iii. 6

39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord ^a caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more : and he went on his way rejoicing.^b

a 1 Ki. 18. 12. Eze. 3. 12, 14.

b Ps. 119. 14, 111.

39. *Out of the water, (εξ.)* This preposition stands opposed to *εἰς*, "into;" and as that may mean *to*, so this may mean *from*; if that means *into*, this means here *out of*. ¶ *The Spirit of the Lord.* See ver. 29. The Spirit had suggested to Philip to go to meet the eunuch and the same Spirit, now that he had fulfilled the design of his going there, directed his departure. ¶ *Caught away.* This phrase has been usually understood of a *forcible* or *miraculous* removal of Philip to some other place. Some have even supposed that he was borne through the air by an angel. (See even Doddridge.) To such foolish interpretations have many expositors been led. The meaning is, clearly, that the Spirit, who had directed Philip to go near the eunuch, now removed him in a similar manner. That this is the meaning is clear, (1.) Because it accounts for all that occurred. It is not wise to suppose the existence of a miracle, except where the effect cannot otherwise be accounted for, and except where there is a plain statement that there was a miracle. (2.) The word "caught away" (*ἔρπυσσε*) does not imply that there was a miracle. The word properly means to seize and bear away any thing violently, without the consent of the owner, as robbers and plunderers do. Then it signifies to remove any thing in a *forcible* manner; to make use of strength or power to remove it. Acts xxiii. 10. Matt. xiii. 19. John x. 28. 1 Cor. iii. 15, &c. In *no case* does it ever denote that a *miracle* is performed. And all that can be signified here is, that the Spirit *strongly admonished* Philip to go to some other place; that he so *forcibly* or *vividly suggested* the duty to his mind, as to *tear him away*, as it were, from the society of the eunuch. He had been deeply interested in the case. He would have found pleasure in continuing the journey with him. But the strong convictions of duty urged by the Holy Spirit, impelled him, as it were, to break off this new and interesting acquaintanceship, and to go to some other place. The purpose for which he was sent, to instruct and baptize the eunuch, was accomplished, and now he was called to some other field of labour.—A similar instance of interpretation has been considered in the Notes on Matt.

40 But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through, he

preached in all the cities, till he came to Cesarea.

iv. 5. ¶ *And he went on his way rejoicing.* His mind was enlightened on a perplexing passage of Scripture. He was satisfied respecting the Messiah. He was baptized; and he experienced that which all feel who embrace the Saviour and are baptized, *joy*. It was joy resulting from the fact that he was reconciled to God; and a joy, the natural effect of having done his duty *promptly*, in making a profession of religion.—If we wish happiness, if we would avoid clouds and gloom, we shall *do our duty at once*. If we delay till to-morrow what we *ought* to do to-day, we may expect to be troubled with melancholy thoughts. If we find peace, it will be in doing promptly *just that* which God requires at our hands.—This is the last that we hear of this man. Some have supposed that this eunuch carried the gospel to Ethiopia, and preached it there. But there is strong evidence to believe that the gospel was not preached there successfully until about the year 330, when it was introduced by *Frumenius*, sent to Abyssinia for that purpose by Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria.—From this narrative we may learn, (1.) That God often prepares the mind to receive the truth. (2.) That this takes place sometimes with the great and the noble, as well as the poor and obscure. (3.) We should study the Scriptures. It is the way in which God usually directs the mind in the truths of religion. (4.) They who read the Bible with candour and care, may expect that God will, in some mode, guide them into the truth. It will often be in a way which they least expect; but they need not be afraid of being left to darkness or error. (5.) We should be ready at all times to speak to sinners. God often prepares their minds, as he did that of the eunuch, to receive the truth. (6.) We should not be afraid of the great, the rich, or of strangers. God often prepares *their* minds to receive the truth; and we may find a man willing to hear of the Saviour where we least expected it. (7.) We should do our duty in this respect, as Philip did, promptly. We should not delay or hesitate; but should *at once* do that which we believe is in accordance with the will of God. See Ps. cxix. 60.

40. *But Philip was found.* That is, he came to Azotus, or he was not heard of until he reached Azotus. The word is often used in this sense. See 1 Chron.

xxix. 17, *margin*. 2 Chron. xxix. 29, *margin*. Gen. ii. 20. See also Luke xvii. 18. Rom. vii. 10. In all these places the word is used in the sense of *to be*, or *to be present*. It does not mean here that there was any *miracle* in the case, but that Philip, after leaving the eunuch, *came to* or *was in* Azotus. ¶ *Azotus*. This is the Greek name of the city which by the Hebrews was called *Ashdod*. It was one of the cities which were *not* taken by Joshua, and which remained in the possession of the Philistines. It was to this place that the ark of God was sent when it was taken by the Philistines from the Israelites; and here Dagon was cast down before it. 1 Sam. v. 2, 3. Uzziah, king of Judah, broke down its wall, and built cities or watch-towers around it. 2 Chron. xxvi. 6. It was a place of great strength and consequence. It was distant about thirty miles from Gaza. It was situated on the coast of the Mediterranean, and was a seaport. The distance which Philip had to travel, therefore, was not very great, and as Azotus lay almost directly *north* of Gaza, it shows that in order to reach it, he must have parted from the eunuch, whose route was almost directly *south* of Gaza. It is at present inhabited by Arabs chiefly, and is by them called *Mezdel*. Dr. Wittman describes it at present as being entered by two small gates. In passing through it, he saw several fragments of columns, capitals, &c. In the centre of the town is a handsome mosque with a minaret. The surrounding country is represented as remarkably verdant and beautiful. In the neighbourhood there stands an abundance of fine old olive-trees, and the region around it is fertile. ¶ *He preached in all the cities.* Joppa, Lydda, Askalon, Arimathea, &c. lying along the coast of the Mediterranean. ¶ *Cesarea*. This city was formerly called *Strato's Tower*. It is situated on the coast of the Mediterranean, at the mouth of a small river, and has a fine harbour. It is thirty-six miles south of Acre, and about sixty-two northwest of Jerusalem, and about the same distance northeast of Azotus. This city is supposed by some to be the Hazor mentioned in Josh. xi. 1. It was rebuilt by Herod the Great, and named *Cæsarea* in honour of Augustus Cæsar. The city was dedicated to him; the seaport was called *Sebaste*, the Greek word for Augustus. It was adorned with most splendid houses; and the temple of

CHAPTER IX.

AND Saul, yet ^a breathing out threatenings and slaughter

a c.8.3. Ga.1.13.

Cæsar was erected by Herod over-against the mouth of the haven, in which was placed the statue of the Roman emperor. It became the seat of the Roman governor while Judea was a Roman province. Acts xxiii. 33; xxv. 6. 13. Philip afterwards resided at this place. See Acts xxi. 8, 9. Cesarea at present is inhabited only by jackals and beasts of prey. "Perhaps," says Dr. Clarke, "there has not been in the history of the world an example of any city that in so short a space of time rose to such an extraordinary height of splendour as did this of Cesarea; or that exhibits a more awful contrast to its former magnificence, by the present desolate appearance of its ruins. Not a single inhabitant remains. Of its gorgeous palaces and temples, enriched with the choicest works of art, scarcely a trace can be discerned. Within the space of ten years after laying the foundation, from an obscure fortress, it became the most flourishing and celebrated city of all Syria." Now it is in utter desolation. (See Robinson's Calmet, Art. *Cæsarea*.)

CHAPTER IX.

THIS chapter commences a very important part of the Acts of the Apostles—the conversion and labours of Saul of Tarsus. The remainder of the book is chiefly occupied with an account of his labours and trials in the establishment of churches, and in spreading the gospel through the Gentile world. As the fact that the gospel was to be thus preached to the Gentiles was a very important fact, and as the toils of the apostle Paul and his fellow-labourers for this purpose were of an exceedingly interesting character, it was desirable to preserve an authentic record of those labours; and that record we have in the remainder of this book.

1. *And Saul.* Note, ch. vii. 58; viii. 3. He had been engaged before in persecuting the Christians, but he now sought opportunity to gratify his insatiable desire on a larger scale. ¶ *Yet breathing.* Not satisfied with what he had done. ch. viii. 3. The word *breathing out* is expressive often of any deep, agitating emotion, as we then *breathe* rapidly and violently. It is thus expressive of violent *anger*. The emotion is absorbing, agitating, exhausting, and demands a more rapid circulation of blood to supply the exhausted vitality; and this demands an increased

against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high-priest,
2 And desired of him letters to

supply of oxygen, or vital air, which leads to the increased action of the lungs. The word is often used in this sense in the classics. (*Schleusner*.) It is a favourite expression with Homer. Euripides has the same expression; "Breathing out fire and slaughter." So Theocritus; "They came unto the assembly breathing mutual slaughter." Idyll. xxii. 82. ¶ *Threatening.* Denunciation; threatening them with every breath—the action of a man violently enraged, and who was bent on vengeance. It denotes also intense activity and energy in persecution. ¶ *Slaughter.* Murder. Intensely desiring to put to death as many Christians as possible. He rejoiced in their death, and joined in condemning them. Acts xxvi. 10, 11. From this latter place it seems that he had been concerned in putting many of them to death. ¶ *The disciples of the Lord.* Against Christians. ¶ *Went unto the high-priest.* Note, Matt. ii. 4. The letters were written and signed in the name, and by the authority of the sanhedrim, or great council of the nation. The high-priest did it as president of that council. See ver. 14, and ch. xxii. 6. The high-priest of that time was Theophilus, son of Ananus, who had been appointed at the feast of Pentecost, A. D. 37, by Vitellius, the Roman governor. His brother Jonathan had been removed from that office the same year. (*Kuinöl*.)

2. *And desired of him.* This shows the intensity of his wish to persecute the Christians, that he was willing to *ask* for such an employment. ¶ *Letters.* Epistles, implying a *commission* to bring them to Jerusalem for trial and punishment. From this it seems that the sanhedrim at Jerusalem claimed jurisdiction over *all* synagogues every where. They claimed the authority of regulating every where the Jewish religion. ¶ *To Damascus.* This was a celebrated city of Syria, and long the capital of a kingdom of that name. It is situated in a delightful region about one hundred and twenty miles northeast of Jerusalem, and about one hundred and ninety miles southeast of Antioch. It is in the midst of an extensive plain, abounding with cypress and palm-trees, and extremely fertile. It is watered by the river Barrady, anciently called *Abana*. 2 Kings v. 12. About five miles from the city is a place called the "meeting of the wa-

Damascus to the synagogues, that, if he found any of ¹ this way, whether they were men or women, he

¹ or, *the way*.

might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

3 And ^a as he journeyed, he came

^a 1 Cor. 15. 8.

ters," where the Barrady is joined by another river, and thence is divided by art into several streams that flow through the plain. These streams, six or seven in number, are conveyed to water the orchards, farms, &c. and give to the whole scene a very picturesque appearance. The city, situated in a delightful climate, in a fertile country, is perhaps among the most pleasant in the world. It is called by the Orientals themselves the *paradise on earth*. This city is mentioned often in the Old Testament. It was a city in the time of Abraham. Gen. xv. 2. By whom it was founded is unknown. It was taken and garrisoned by David, A. M. 2992. 2 Sam. viii. 6. 1 Chron. xviii. 6. It is subsequently mentioned as sustaining very important parts in the conflicts of the Jews with Syria. 2 Kings xiv. 25; xvi. 5. Isa. ix. 11. It was taken by the Romans, A. M. 3939, or about sixty years before Christ; in whose possession it was when Saul went there. It was conquered by the Saracens, A. D. 713. About the year 1250 it was taken by the Christians in the crusades, and was captured A. D. 1517, by Selim, and has been since under the Ottoman emperors.

The Arabians call this city *Damasc*, or *Demesch*, or *Schams*. It is one of the most commercial cities in the Ottoman empire, and is distinguished also for manufactures, particularly for *steel*, hence called Damascus steel. The population is estimated by Ali Bey at two hundred thousand; Volney states it at eighty thousand; Hassel, at one hundred thousand. About twenty thousand are Maronites of the Catholic church, five thousand Greeks, and one thousand are Jews. The road from Jerusalem to Damascus lies between two mountains, not above a hundred paces distant from each other; both are round at the bottom, and terminate in a point. That nearest the great road is called *Cocab*, *the star*, in memory of the dazzling light which is here said to have appeared to Saul. ¶ *To the synagogues*. Note, Matt. iv. 23. The Jews were scattered into nearly all the regions surrounding Judea; and it is natural to suppose that many of them would be found in Damascus. Josephus assures us that ten thousand were massacred there in one hour; and at another time eighteen thousand, with their wives and children. (*Jewish War*, b. ii. ch. xx. § 2; b. vii. ch. viii. § 7.)

See Notes, Acts ii. 9—11. By whom the gospel was preached there, or how they had been converted to Christianity, is unknown. The presumption is, that some of those who had been converted on the day of Pentecost, had carried the gospel to Syria. ¶ *That if*, &c. It would seem that it was not certainly known that there were any Christians there. It was presumed that there were; and probably there was a report of that kind. ¶ *Of this way*. Of this way or mode of life; of this kind of opinions and conduct; that is, any Christians. ¶ *He might bring them*, &c. To be tried. The sanhedrim at Jerusalem claimed jurisdiction over religious opinions; and their authority would naturally be respected by foreign Jews.

3. *And as he journeyed*. On his way; or while he was travelling. The place where this occurred is not known. Tradition has fixed it at the mountain now called *Cocab*. See Note, on ver. 2. All that we know of it is that it was near to Damascus. ¶ *And suddenly*. Like a flash of lightning. ¶ *There shined round about him*, &c. The language which is expressed here would be used in describing a flash of lightning. Many critics have supposed that God made use of a sudden flash to arrest Paul, and that he was thus alarmed and brought to reflection. That God *might* make use of such a means cannot be denied. But to this supposition in this case there are some unanswerable objections. (1.) It was declared to be the appearance of the Lord Jesus; ver. 27, "Barnabas declared unto them how that he had seen the Lord in the way." 1 Cor. xv. 8, "And last of all he was seen of me also." 1 Cor. ix. 1, "Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" (2.) Those who were with Saul saw the light, but did not hear the voice. Acts xxii. 9. See Note. 'This is incredible on the supposition that it was a flash of lightning near them. (3.) It was manifestly regarded as a message to Saul. The light appeared, and the voice spake to him. The others did not even hear the address. Besides, (4.) It was as easy for Jesus to appear in a supernatural manner, as to appear amidst thunder and lightning. That the Lord Jesus appeared, is distinctly affirmed. And we shall see that it is probable that he would appear in a supernatural manner.

near Damascus; and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

4 And he fell to the earth, and

In order to understand this, it may be necessary to make the following remarks: (1.) God was accustomed to appear to the Jews in a cloud; in a pillar of smoke, or of fire; in that peculiar splendour which they denominated the *Shechinah*. In this way he went before them into the land of Canaan. Ex. xiii. 21, 22. Comp. Isa. iv. 5, 6. This appearance or visible manifestation they called the *glory of JEHOVAH*. Isa. vi. 1—4. Ex. xvi. 7, "In the morning ye shall see the glory of the Lord." 10. Lev. ix. 23. Num. xiv. 10; xvi. 19. 42; xxiv. 16. 1 Kings viii. 11. Ezek. x. 4. Note, Luke ii. 9, "The glory of the Lord shone round about them." (2.) The Lord Jesus, in his transfiguration on the mount, had been encompassed with that glory. Notes, Matt. xvii. 1—5. (3.) He had spoken of similar glory as pertaining to him; as that which he had been invested with before his incarnation; and to which he would return. John xvii. 5, "And now, Father, glorify thou me, &c. with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Matt. xxv. 31, "The Son of man shall come in his glory." Comp. Matt. xvi. 27; xix. 28. To this glory he had returned when he left the earth. (4.) It is a sentiment which cannot be shown to be incorrect, that the various appearances of "the angel of Jehovah," and of Jehovah, mentioned in the Old Testament, were appearances of the Messiah; the God who should be incarnate; the peculiar protector of his people. See Isa. vi. comp. with John xii. 41. (5.) If the Lord Jesus appeared to Saul, it would be in this manner. It would be in his appropriate glory and honour, as the ascended Messiah. That he *did* appear is expressly affirmed. (6.) This was an occasion when, if ever, such an appearance was proper. The design was to convert an infuriated persecutor, and to make him an apostle. To do this it was necessary that he should see the Lord Jesus. 1 Cor. ix. 1, 2. The design was further to make him an eminent instrument in carrying the gospel to the Gentiles. A signal miracle; a demonstration that he was invested with his appropriate glory (John xvii. 5); a calling up a new witness to the fact of his resurrection, and his solemn investment with glory in the heavens, seemed to be required in thus calling a violent persecutor to be an apostle

heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?^a

5 And he said, Who art thou,

a Matt. 25. 40, 45.

and friend. (7.) We are to regard this appearance, therefore, as the re-appearance of the *Shechinah*, the Son of God invested with appropriate glory, appearing to convince an enemy of his ascension, and to change him from a foe to a friend.

It has been objected that as the Lord Jesus had ascended to heaven, that it cannot be presumed that his body would return to the earth again. To this we may reply, that the New Testament has thrown no light on this. Perhaps it is not necessary to suppose that his body returned, but that he made such a visible manifestation of himself as to convince Saul that he was the Messiah. ¶ *From heaven.* From above; from the sky. In Acts xxvi. 13, Paul says that the light was above the brightness of the sun at mid-day.

4. *And he fell to the earth.* He was astonished and overcome by the sudden flash of light. There is a remarkable similarity between what occurred here, and what is recorded of *Daniel* in regard to the visions which he saw. Dan. viii. 17. Also Dan. x. 8, "Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision; and there remained no strength in me, for my comeliness (vigour) was turned into corruption, and I retained no strength." The effect was such as to overpower the body. ¶ *And heard a voice.* The whole company heard a voice (ver. 7), but did not distinguish it as addressed particularly to Saul. He heard it speaking to himself. ¶ *Saying unto him, &c.* This shows that it was not *thunder*, as many have supposed. It was a distinct articulation or utterance, addressing him by name. ¶ *Saul, Saul.* A mode of address that is emphatic. The repetition of the name would fix his attention. Thus Jesus addresses Martha (Luke x. 41), and Simon (Luke xxii. 31), and Jerusalem (Matt. xxiii. 37). ¶ *Why.* For what reason. Jesus had done him no injury; had given him no provocation. All the opposition of sinners to the Lord Jesus and his church, is without cause. See Note, John xv. 25, "They hated me without a cause." ¶ *Persecutest.* Note, Matt. v. 11. ¶ *Thou me?* Christ and his people are one. John xv. 1—6. To persecute *them*, therefore, was to persecute *him*. Matt. xxv. 40. 45.

5. *And he said, who art thou, Lord?*

Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick ^a against the pricks.

a c. 5, 39.

The word *Lord* here, as is frequently the case in the New Testament, means no more than *sir*. John iv. 19. It is evident that Saul did not as yet know that this was the Lord Jesus. He heard the voice as of a *man*; he heard himself addressed; but by whom the words were spoken, was to him unknown. In his amazement and confusion, he naturally asked who it was that was thus addressing him. ¶ *And the Lord said.* In this place the word *Lord* is used in a higher sense, to denote the Saviour. It is his usual appellation. See Note, Acts i. 24. ¶ *I am Jesus.* It is clear from this, that there was a personal appearance of the Saviour; that he was present to Saul; but in what particular *form*—whether *seen* as a man, or only appearing by the manifestation of his glory, is not affirmed. It was a personal appearance, however, of the Lord Jesus, designed to take the work of converting such a persecutor into his own hands, without the ordinary means. Yet he designed to convert him in a natural way. He *arrested* his attention; filled him with alarm at his guilt; and then presented the *truth* respecting himself. In ch. xxii. 8, the expression is thus recorded: "I am Jesus of Nazareth," &c. There is no contradiction, as Luke here records only a *part* of what was said; Paul afterwards stated the whole. This declaration was fitted peculiarly to humble and mortify Saul. There can be no doubt that he had often blasphemed his name, and profanely derided the notion that the Messiah could come out of Nazareth. Jesus here uses, however, that very designation. 'I am Jesus the Nazarene, the object of your contempt and scorn.' Yet Saul saw him now invested with peculiar glory. ¶ *It is hard,* &c. This is evidently a proverbial expression. Kuinöl has quoted numerous places in which a similar mode of expression occurs in Greek writers. Thus Euripides, Bacch. 791, "I, who am a frail mortal, should rather sacrifice to him who is a God, than by giving place to anger, *kick against the goads.*" So Pindar, Pyth. ii. 173, "It is profitable to bear willingly the assumed yoke. To kick against the goad is pernicious conduct." So Terence, Phome. 1. 2. 27, "It is foolishness for thee to kick against a goad." Ovid has the same idea, Trist. b. ii. 15.

6 And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what ^b wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the

b c. 16, 30.

The word translated "pricks" here (*κινερα*), means properly any sharp point which will pierce or perforate, as the sting of a bee, &c. But it commonly means an ox-goad, a sharp piece of iron stuck into the end of a stick, with which the ox is urged on. These goads among the Hebrews were made very large. Thus Shamgar slew six hundred men with one of them. Judg. iii. 31. Comp. 1 Sam. xiii. 21. The expression To kick against the prick, or the goad, is derived from the action of a stubborn and unyielding ox, kicking against the goad. And as the ox would injure no one by it but himself; as he would gain nothing; it comes to denote an obstinate and refractory disposition and course of conduct, opposing motives to good conduct; resisting the authority of him who has a right to command; and opposing the leadings of Providence, to the injury of him who makes the resistance. It denotes rebellion against lawful authority, and thus getting into greater difficulty by attempting to oppose the commands to duty. This is the condition of every sinner. If men wish to be happy, they should cheerfully submit to the authority of God. They should not rebel against the dealings of Providence. They should not murmur against their Creator. They should not resist the claims of their consciences. By all this they would only injure themselves. No man can resist God or his own conscience and be happy. And nothing is more difficult than for a man to pursue a course of pleasure and sin against the admonitions of God and the reproofs of his own conscience. Men evince this temper in the following ways: (1.) By violating plain laws of God. (2.) By attempting to resist his claims. (3.) By refusing to do what their conscience requires. (4.) By grieving the Holy Spirit, by attempting to free themselves from serious impressions and alarms. They will return with redoubled frequency and power. (5.) By pursuing a course of vice and wickedness against what they know to be right. (6.) By refusing to submit to the dealings of Providence. And (7.) In any way by opposing God, and refusing to submit to his authority, and to do what is right.

6. *And he trembling.* Alarmed at what he saw and heard, and at the conscio-

city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

ness of his own evil course. It is not remarkable that a sinner trembles when he sees his guilt and danger. ¶ *And astonished.* At what he saw. ¶ *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* This indicates a subdued soul; a humbled spirit. Just before, he had sought only to do his *own* will; now he inquired what was the will of the Saviour. Just before he was acting under a commission from the Sanhedrim; now he renounced their supreme authority, and asked what the Lord Jesus would have him to do. Just before he had been engaged in a career of *opposition* to the Lord Jesus; now he sought at once to do his will. This indicates the usual change in the sinner. The great controversy between him and God is, *whose will* shall be followed. The sinner follows his own; the first act of the Christian is to surrender his own will to that of God, and to resolve to do that which he requires. We may further remark here, that this indicates the true nature of conversion. It is decided, prompt, immediate. Paul did not *debate* the matter (Gal. i. 16); he did not inquire what the scribes and Pharisees would say; he did not consult his own reputation; he did not ask what the world would think. With characteristic promptness; with a readiness which showed what he *would* yet be; he gave himself up *at once*, and *entirely*, to the Lord Jesus; evidently with a purpose to do *his* will alone. This was the case also with the jailer at Philippi. Acts xvi. 30. Nor can there be any real conversion where the *heart* and *will* are not given to the Lord Jesus, to be directed and moulded by him at his pleasure. We may test our conversion then by the example of the apostle Paul. If our hearts have been given up as his was, we are true friends of Christ. ¶ *Go into the city.* Damascus. They were near it. ver. 3. ¶ *And it shall be told thee.* It is remarkable that he was thus directed. But we may learn from it, (1.) That even in the most striking and remarkable cases of conversion, there is not *at once* a clear view of duty. What course of life should be followed; what should be done; nay, what should be *believed*, is not at once apparent. (2.) The aid of others, and especially of ministers, and of experienced Christians, is often very desirable to aid even those who are converted in the most remarkable manner. Saul

7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hear-

was converted by a miracle: the Saviour appeared to him in his glory; of the truth of his Messiahship he had no doubt, but still he was dependent on a humble disciple in Damascus to be instructed in what he should do. (3.) Those who are converted, in however striking a manner it may be, should be *willing* to seek the counsel of those who are in the church and in the ministry before them. The most striking evidence of their conversion will not prevent their deriving important direction and benefit from the aged, the experienced, and the wise in the Christian church. (4.) Such remarkable conversions are fitted to *induce* the subjects of the change to seek counsel and direction. They produce humility, a deep sense of sin and of unworthiness; and a willingness to be taught and directed by any one who *can* point out the way of duty and of life.

7. *And the men which journeyed with him.* Why these men attended him is unknown. They might have been appointed to aid him, or they may have been travellers with whom Saul had accidentally fallen in. ¶ *Stood speechless.* In Acts xxvi. 14, it is said that they all fell to the earth at the appearance of the light. But there is no contradiction. The narrative in that place refers to the *immediate* effect of the appearance of the light. They were *immediately* smitten to the ground together. This was *before* the voice spake to Saul. Acts xxvi. 14. In this place (ix. 7) the historian is speaking of what occurred *after* the first alarm. There is no improbability that they rose from the ground immediately, and surveyed the scene with silent amazement and alarm. The word *speechless* (ἐννοσι) properly denotes those who are so astonished or stupefied as to be unable to speak. In the Greek writers it means those who are deaf and dumb. ¶ *Hearing a voice.* Hearing a *sound* or *noise*. The word here rendered voice is thus frequently used, as in Gen. iii. 8. 1 Sam. xii. 18. Ps. xxix. 3, 4. Matt. xxiv. 31. (Greek.) 1 Thess. iv. 16. In Acts xxii. 9, it is said, "They which were with me (Paul) saw indeed the light, and were afraid, but they *heard not the voice* of him that spake to me." In this place, the words, "heard not the voice," must be understood in the sense of *understanding the words*, of hearing the address, the distinct articulation, which Paul heard. They heard a *noise*, they were amazed

ing a voice, but ^a seeing no man.

8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought *him* into Damascus.

a Da. 10.7.

and alarmed, but they did not hear the distinct words addressed to Saul. A similar instance we have in John xii. 23, 29, when the voice of God came from heaven to Jesus. "The people who stood by and heard it said it thundered." They heard the *sound*, the *noise*; they did *not* distinguish the *words* addressed to him. See also Dan. x. 7, and 1 Kings xix. 11—13.

8. *When his eyes were opened.* He naturally closed them at the appearance of the light; and in his fright kept them closed for some time. † *He saw no man.*

This darkness continued three days. ver.

9. There is no reason to suppose that there was a *miracle* in this blindness, for in ch. xxii. 2, it is expressly said to have been caused by the intense light. "And when I could not see for the glory of that light," &c. The intense, sudden light had so affected the optic nerve of the eye as to cause a temporary blindness. This effect is not uncommon. The disease of the eye which is thus produced is called *amaurosis*, or more commonly *gutta serena*. It consists in a loss of sight without any apparent defect of the eye. Sometimes the disease is periodical, coming on suddenly, continuing for three or four days, and then disappearing. (*Webster*.) A disease of this kind is often caused by excessive light. When we look at the sun, or into a furnace, or into a crucible, with fused metal, we are conscious of a temporary pain in the eye, and of a momentary blindness. "In northern and tropical climates, from the glare of the sun or snow, a variety of amaurosis (*gutta serena*) occurs, which, if it produces blindness during the day, is named *nyctalopia*, if during the night, *hemeralopia*. Another variety exists in which the individual is blind all day, until a certain hour, when he sees distinctly, or he sees and is blind every alternate day, or is only blind one day in the week, fortnight, or month." (*Edin. Encyc. Art. Surgery*.) A total loss of sight has been the consequence of looking at the sun during an eclipse, or of watching it as it sets in the west. This effect is caused by the intense action of the light on the optic nerve, or sometimes from a disorder

9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; ^b and to him said the Lord in a

b c. 22, 12.

of the brain. A case is mentioned by Michaelis (*Kunniel in loco*) of a man who was made blind by a bright flash of lightning, and who continued so for four weeks, who was again restored to sight in a tempest by a similar flash of lightning. Electricity has been found one of the best remedies for restoring sight in such cases.

9. *And neither did eat nor drink.* Probably because he was overwhelmed with a view of his sins, and was thus indisposed to eat. All the circumstances would contribute to this. His past life; his great sins; the sudden change in his views; his total absorption in the vision; perhaps also his grief at the loss of his sight, would all fill his mind, and indispose him to partake of food. Great grief always produces this effect. And it is not uncommon now for an awakened and convicted sinner, in view of his past sins and danger, to be so pained, as to destroy his inclination for food, and to produce involuntary fasting. We are to remember also that Paul had yet no assurance of forgiveness. He was arrested; alarmed; convinced that Jesus was the Messiah; and humbled, but he had not comfort. He was brought to the dust, and left to three painful days of darkness and suspense, before it was told him what he was to do. In this painful and perplexing state, it was natural that he should abstain from food. This case should not be brought now, however, to prove, that convicted sinners *must* remain in darkness and under conviction. Saul's case was extraordinary. His blindness was literal. This state of darkness was necessary to humble him and fit him for his work. But the moment a sinner will give his heart to Christ, he may find peace. If he resists, and rebels longer, it will be his own fault. By the nature of the case, as well as by the promises of the Bible, if a sinner will yield himself at once to the Lord Jesus, he may obtain peace. That sinners do not sooner obtain peace, is because they do not sooner submit themselves to God.

10. *A certain disciple.* A Christian. Many have supposed that he was one of the seventy disciples. But nothing more

vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.

11 And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the street which

is certainly known of him than is related here. He had very probably been some time a Christian (ver. 13), and had heard of Saul, but was personally a stranger to him. In ch. xxii. 12, it is said that he was a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there. There was wisdom in sending such a Christian to Saul, as it might do much to conciliate the minds of the Jews there towards him. ¶ *Said the Lord.* The Lord *Jesus* is alone mentioned in all this transaction. And as he had commenced the work of converting Saul, it is evident that he is intended here. See Note, ch. i. 24. ¶ *In a vision.* Perhaps by a dream. The main idea is, that he revealed his will to him in the case. The word *vision* is often used in speaking of the communications made to the prophets, and commonly means that future events were made to pass in review before the mind, as we look upon a landscape. See Isa. i. 1. Gen. xvi. 1. Num. xii. 6. Ezek. xi. 24. Acts x. 3; xi. 5; xvi. 9. Dan. ii. 19; vii. 2; viii. 1, 2, 26; x. 7. Note, Matt. xvii. 9.

11. *Into the street which is called Straight.* This street extends now from the eastern to the western gate, about three miles, crossing the whole city and suburbs in a direct line. Near the eastern gate is a house, said to be that of Judah, in which Paul lodged. There is in it a very small closet, where tradition reports that the apostle passed three days without food, till Ananias restored him to sight. Tradition also says that he had here the vision recorded in 2 Cor. xii. 2. There is also in this street a fountain whose water is drunk by Christians, in remembrance of that which, they suppose, the same fountain produced for the baptism of Paul. (*Rob. Calmet.*) ¶ *Of Tarsus.* This city was the capital of Cilicia, a province of Asia Minor. It was situated on the banks of the river Cydnus. It was distinguished for the culture of Greek philosophy and literature, so that at one time in its schools, and in the number of its learned men, it was the rival of Athens and Alexandria. In allusion to this, perhaps, Paul says that he was "born in Tarsus, a citizen of no mean city." Acts xxi. 39. In reward for its exertions and sacrifices during the civil wars of Rome, Tarsus was made a free city by Augustus. See

is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for *one* called Saul of Tarsus: for behold, he prayeth,

Note, Acts xxii. 28, 24; xxi. 39; xvi. 37. ¶ *Behold he prayeth.* This gives us a full indication of the manner in which Saul passed the three days mentioned in ver. 9. It is plain from what follows, that Ananias regarded Saul as a foe to Christianity, and that he would have been apprehensive of danger if he were with him. ver. 13, 14. This remark, "behold he prayeth," is made to him to silence his fears, and to indicate the change in the feelings and views of Saul. Before, he was a persecutor; now his change is indicated by his giving himself to prayer. That Saul did not *pray* before, is not implied by this; for he fully accorded with the customs of the Jews. Phil. iii. 4—6. But his prayers then were not the prayers of a saint. They were then the prayers of a Pharisee (comp. Luke xviii. 10, &c.); now they were the prayers of a broken-hearted sinner; then he prayed depending on his own righteousness; now, depending on the mercy of God in the Messiah.—We may learn here, (1.) That one indication of conversion to God is real prayer. A Christian may as well be characterized by that as by any single appellation—'a man of prayer.' (2.) It is always the attendant of true conviction for sin, that we pray. The convicted sinner feels his danger, and his need of forgiveness. Conscience that he has no righteousness himself, he now seeks that of another, and depends on the mercy of God. Before, he was too proud to pray; now, he is willing to humble himself through Jesus Christ, and ask for mercy. (3.) It is a sufficient indication of the character of *any* man to say, 'behold, he prays.' It at once tells us, better than volumes would without this, his *real* character. Knowing this, we know all about him. We at once confide in his piety, his honesty, his humility, his willingness to do good. It is at once the indication of his state with God, and the pledge that he will do his duty to men. We mean, of course, *real* prayer. Knowing that a man is sincere, and humble, and faithful in his private devotions, and in the devotions of his family, we confide in him, and are willing at once to trust to his readiness to do all that he is convinced that he *ought* to do. Ananias, apprized of this in Saul, had full evidence of the change of his character, and was convinced that he ought to

12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting *his* hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man ^a how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem :

14 And here he ^b hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call ^c on thy name.

^a 1 Tim. 1. 13. ^b ver. 21. ^c 1 Cor. 1. 2. 2 Tim. 2. 22. d c. 13. 2. Ro. 1. 1. 1 Cor. 15. 10. Gal. 1. 15. Eph. 3. 7, 8.

lay aside all his former views, and at once to seek him, and to acknowledge him as a brother.

12. *And he hath seen in a vision, &c.* When this was shown to Saul, or how, is not recorded. The vision was shown to Saul to assure him when he came that he was no impostor. He was thus *prepared* to receive consolation from this disciple. He was even apprized of his *name*, that he might be more confirmed.

13, 14. *I have heard by many, &c.* This was in the *vision*. ver. 10. The passage of such a train of thoughts through the mind was perfectly natural at the command to go and search out Saul. There would instantly occur all that had been heard of his fury in persecution; and the expression here may indicate the state of a mind *amazed* that such an one should need his counsel, and *afraid*, perhaps, of intrusting himself to one thus bent on persecution. All this evidently passed in the *dream* or *vision* of Ananias; and perhaps cannot be considered as any *deliberate* unwillingness to go to him. It is clear, however, that *such* thoughts should have been banished, and that he should have gone *at once* to the praying Saul. When Christ commands, we should suffer no suggestion of our own thoughts, and no apprehension of our own danger, to interfere. ¶ *By many.* Probably many who had fled from persecution, and had taken refuge in Damascus. It is also evident (ver. 14), that Ananias had been *apprized*, perhaps by letters from the Christians at Jerusalem, of the purpose which Saul had in view in now going to Damascus. ¶ *To thy saints.* Christians; called saints (ἁγιοί) because they are holy, or consecrated to God.

15. *Go thy way.* This is often the only answer that we obtain to the suggestion of our doubts and hesitations about duty. God tells us still to *do* what he requires, with an assurance only that his commands

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for ^d he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before ^e the Gentiles, and kings, ^f and the ^g children of Israel.

16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer ^h for my name's sake.

17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting ⁱ his hands on him, said,

^e Ro. 11. 13. Gal. 2. 7, 8. ^f c. 25. 23, &c. ^g c. 28. 17, &c. ^h c. 20. 23. 2 Cor. 11. 23-27. 2 Tim. 1. 11, 12. ⁱ c. 8. 17.

are just, and that there are good reasons for them. ¶ *A chosen vessel.* The usual meaning of the word *vessel* is well known. It usually denotes a *cup* or *basin*, such as is used in a house. It then denotes *any* instrument which may be used to accomplish a purpose, perhaps particularly with the notion of *conveying* or communicating. In the Scriptures it is used to denote the *instrument* or *agent* which God employs to convey his favours to mankind; and is thus employed to represent the ministers of the gospel, or the *body* of the minister. 2 Cor. iv. 7. 1 Thess. iv. 4. Comp. Isa. xiii. 5. Paul is called *chosen* because Christ had *selected* him, as he did his other apostles, for this service. Note, John xv. 16. ¶ *To bear my name.* To communicate the knowledge of me. ¶ *Before the Gentiles.* The nations; all who were not Jews. This was the *principal* employment of Paul. He spent his life in this, and regarded himself as peculiarly called to be the apostle of the Gentiles. Rom. xi. 13; xv. 16. Gal. ii. 8. ¶ *And kings.* This was fulfilled, Acts xxv. 23, &c. xxvi. 32; xxvii. 24. ¶ *And the children of Israel.* The Jews. This was done. He *immediately* began to preach to them. ver. 20-22. Wherever he went, he preached the gospel first to them, and then to the Gentiles. Acts xiii. 46; xxviii. 17.

16. *For I will shew him, &c.* This seems to be added to encourage Ananias. He had feared Saul. The Lord now informs him that Saul, hitherto his enemy, would ever after be his friend. He would not merely *profess* repentance, but would *manifest* the sincerity of it by encountering trials and reproaches for his sake. The prediction here was fully accomplished, ch. xx. 23. 2 Cor. xi. 23-27. 2 Tim. i. 11, 12.

17. *Putting his hands on him.* This was not *ordination*, but was the usual mode of imparting or communicating

Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and ^a be filled with the Holy Ghost.

a c. 24.

blessings. See Note Matt. xix. 13; ix. 18. ¶ *Brother Saul.* An expression recognising him as a fellow-christian. ¶ *Be filled with the Holy Ghost.* Note, Acts ii. 4.

18. *As it had been scales.* ὡσεὶ λεπίδες. The word ὡσεὶ, "as it had been," is designed to *qualify* the following word. It is not said that scales *literally* fell from his eyes; but that an effect followed as if scales had been suddenly taken off. Evidently the whole expression is designed to mean no more than this. The effect was such as would take place if some dark, impervious substance had been placed before the eyes, and had been suddenly removed. The cure was as sudden, the sight was as immediate, as if such an interposing substance had been suddenly removed. This is all that the expression fairly implies, and this is all that the nature of the case demands. As the blindness had been caused by the natural effect of the light, probably on the optic nerve (ver. 8, 9, *Note*), it is manifest that no *literal* removing of scales would restore the vision. We are therefore to lay aside the idea of *literal* scales falling to the earth; no such thing is affirmed, and no such thing would have met the case. The word translated *scales* is used nowhere else in the New Testament. It means properly the small crust or layer which composes a part of the covering of a fish, and also any thin layer or leaf exfoliated or separated; as scales of iron, bone, or a piece of bark, &c. (*Webster*.) An effect similar to this is described in Tobit xi. 8, 13. It is evident that there was a miracle in the *healing* of Saul. The *blindness* was the natural effect of the light. The *cure* was by miraculous power. This is evident, (1.) Because there were no means used that would naturally restore the sight. It may be remarked here that *gutta serena* has been regarded by physicians as one of the most incurable of diseases. Few cases are restored; and few remedies are efficacious. (See Ed. Encyc. Art. *Surgery*, on *Amaurosis*.) (2.) Ananias was sent for this very purpose to heal him. ver. 17. (3.) The *immediate* effect shows that this was miraculous. Had it been a *slow* recovery, it might have been doubtful. But here it was instantaneous, and thus put

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales · and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

19 And when he had received

beyond a question that it was a miracle. ¶ *And was baptized.* In this he followed the example of all the early converts to Christianity. They were baptized immediately. See Acts ii. 41; viii. 12, 36—39.

19. *Had received meat.* Food. The word *meat* has undergone a change since our translation was made. It then meant, as the original does, food of all kinds. ¶ *With the disciples.* With Christians. Comp. Acts ii. 42. ¶ *Certain days.* How long is not known. It was long enough, however, to preach the gospel. ver. 22. ch. xxii. 20. It might have been for some months, as he did not go to Jerusalem under three years from that time. He remained some time at Damascus, and then went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus, and then went to Jerusalem. Gal. i. 17. This visit to *Arabia* Luke has omitted, but there is no contradiction. He does not affirm that he did not go to Arabia.

We have now passed through the account of one of the most remarkable conversions to Christianity that has ever occurred—that of the apostle Paul. This conversion has always been justly considered as a strong proof of the Christian religion. For, (1.) This change could not have occurred by any *event* of fair prospects of honour. He was distinguished already as a Jew. He had had the best opportunities for education that the nation afforded. He had every prospect of rising to distinction and office. (2.) It could not have been produced by any prospect of wealth or fame, by becoming a Christian. Christians were poor; and to be a Christian then was to be exposed to contempt, persecution, and death. Saul had no reason to suppose that *he* would escape the common lot of Christians. (3.) He was as firmly opposed to Christianity before his conversion as possible. He had already distinguished himself for his hostility. Infidels often say that Christians are prejudiced in favour of their religion. But here was a man, at first, a bitter infidel, and foe to Christianity. All the prejudices of his education, and his prospects, all his former views and feelings, were opposed to the gospel of Christ. He became, however, one of its most firm advocates

meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.^a

20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

21 But all that heard *him* were ^b amazed, and said, Is not this he ^c

^a c.26.20. Ga.1.17.

^b Ga.1.13,23.

^c c.S.3.

and friends; and it is for infidels to account for this change. There must have been *some* cause, some motive for it; and is there any thing more rational than the supposition, that Saul was convinced in a most striking and wonderful manner of the truth of Christianity? (4.) His subsequent life showed that his change was sincere and real. He encountered danger and persecution to evince his attachment to Christ; he went from land to land, and exposed himself to every danger, and every mode of obloquy and scorn, always rejoicing that he was a Christian, and was permitted to suffer as a Christian; and has thus given the highest proofs of his sincerity. If *these* sufferings, and if the life of Paul were not evidences of sincerity, then it would be impossible to fix on any circumstances of a man's life that would furnish proof that he was not a deceiver. (5.) If Paul was sincere; if this conversion was genuine, the Christian religion is true. Nothing else *but* a religion from heaven could produce this change. There is here, therefore, the independent testimony of a man, who was once a persecutor; converted, not by the preaching of the apostles; changed in a wonderful manner; his whole life, views, and feelings revolutionized, and all his subsequent days evincing the sincerity of his feelings, and the reality of the change. He is just such a *witness* as infidels ought to be satisfied with; whose testimony cannot be impeached; who had no interested motives, and who was willing to stand forth any where, and avow his change of feeling and purpose. We adduce him as such a witness; and infidels are *bound* to dispose of his testimony, or to embrace the religion which he embraced. (6.) The example of Saul does not stand alone. Hundreds and thousands of enemies, persecutors, and slanderers have been changed, and each one becomes a living witness of the power and truth of the Christian religion. The scoffer becomes reverent; the profane man learns to

that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

22 But Saul increased the more in strength, ^d and confounded the ^e Jews, which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

^d Ps.84.7.

^e c.18.28.

speak the praise of God; the sullen, bitter foe of Christ becomes his friend, and lives and dies under the influence of his religion. Could better proof be asked that this religion is from God?

20. *And straightway.* Immediately. This was an evidence of the genuineness of his conversion, that he was willing at once to avow himself to be the friend of the Lord Jesus. ¶ *He preached Christ.* He proclaimed and proved that Jesus was the Christ. See ver. 22. Many manuscripts read here *Jesus* instead of *Christ*. Griesbach has adopted this reading. Such is also the Syriac, the Vulgate, and the Ethiopic. This reading accords much better with the subject than the common reading. That *Christ*, or the *Messiah*, was the son of God, all admitted. In the New Testament the names *Christ* and *Son of God* are used as synonymous. But the question was, whether *Jesus* was the Christ, or the Son of God, and this Paul showed to the Jews. Paul continued the practice of attending the synagogues; and in the synagogues any one had a right to speak, who was invited by the officiating minister. See ch. xiii. 15. ¶ *That he is the Son of God.* That he is the Messiah.

21. *Were amazed.* Amazed at his sudden and remarkable change. ¶ *That destroyed.* That opposed; laid waste; or persecuted. Comp. Gal. i. 13. ¶ *For that intent.* With that design, that he might destroy the church at Damascus.

22. *Increased the more in strength.* His conviction of the truth of the Christian religion became stronger every day. Hence his *moral* strength or boldness increased. ¶ *And confounded.* See Acts ii. 6. The word here means *confuted*. It means also occasionally to produce a *tumult*, or *excitement*. Acts xix. 32; xxi. 31. Perhaps the idea of producing such a tumult is intended to be conveyed here. Paul confuted the Jews, and by so doing he was the occasion of their tumultuous proceedings, or he so enraged them as to lead to great agitation and excitement.

23 And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel ^a to kill him.

a c.23.12; 25.3.

A very common effect of close and conclusive argumentation. ¶ *Proving that this. This Jesus. ¶ Is very Christ.* Greek. That this is the Christ. The word *very* means here simply *the*. Greek. ὁ Χριστός. It means that Paul showed by strong and satisfactory arguments, that Jesus of Nazareth was the true Messiah. The arguments which he would use may be easily conceived; but the evangelist has not seen fit to record them.

23. And after that many days, &c. How long a time elapsed before this, is not recorded in this place; but it is evident that the writer means to signify that a considerable time intervened. There is, therefore, an interval here which Luke has not filled up; and if this were the only narrative which we had, we should be at a loss how to understand this. From all that we know now of the usual conduct of the Jews towards the apostles, and especially towards Paul, it would seem highly improbable that this interval would be passed peaceably or quietly. Nay, it would be highly improbable that he would be allowed to remain in Damascus many days without violent persecution. Now it so happens that by turning to another part of the New Testament, we are enabled to ascertain the manner in which this interval was filled up. Turn then to Gal. i. 17, and we learn from Paul himself that he went into Arabia, and spent some time there, and then returned again to Damascus. The precise time which would be occupied in such a journey is not specified; but it would not be performed under a period of some months. In Gal. i. 18, we are informed that he did not go to Jerusalem until three years after his conversion; and as there is reason to believe that he went up to Jerusalem directly after escaping from Damascus the second time (Acts ix. 25, 26), it seems probable that the three years were spent chiefly in Arabia. We have thus an account of the "*many days*" here referred to by Luke. And in this instance we have a striking example of the truth and honesty of the sacred writers. By comparing these two accounts together, we arrive at the whole state of the case. Neither seems to be complete without the other. Luke has left a chasm which he has nowhere else supplied. But that chasm we are enabled to fill up from the

24 But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched ^b the gates day and night, to kill him.

b 2Cor.11.26,&c. Ps.21.11; 37.32,33.

apostle himself, in a letter written long after, and without any design to amend or complete the history of Luke: for the introduction of this history into the epistle to the Galatians was for a very different purpose—to show that he received his commission directly from the Lord Jesus, and in a manner independent of the other apostles. The two accounts, therefore, are like the two parts of a tally; neither is complete without the other; and yet being brought together, they so exactly fit as to show that the one is precisely adjusted to the other. And as the two parts were made by different individuals, and without design of adapting them to each other, they show that the writers had formed no collusion or agreement to impose on the world; that they are separate and independent witnesses; that they are honest men; that their narratives are true records of what actually occurred; and the two narratives constitute, therefore, a strong and very valuable proof of the correctness of the sacred narrative. If asked why Luke has omitted this in the Acts, it may be replied, that there are many circumstances and facts omitted in all histories from the necessity of the case. Comp. John xxi. 25. It is remarkable here, not that he has omitted this, but that he has left a chasm in his own history which can be so readily filled up. ¶ *Were fulfilled.* Had elapsed. ¶ *Took counsel, &c.* Laid a scheme; or designed to kill him. Comp. ch. xxiii. 12; xxv. 3. His zeal and success would enrage them, and they knew of no other way in which they could free themselves from the effects of his arguments and influence.

24. But their laying await. Their counsel; their design. ¶ *Was known of Saul.* Was made known to him. In what way this was communicated, we do not know. This design of the Jews against Saul is referred to in 2 Cor. xi. 32, 33, where it is said, "In Damascus, the governor under Aretas the king kept the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me; and through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped their hands." ¶ *And they watched the gates.* Cities were surrounded by high walls; and of course the gates were presumed to be the only places of escape. As they supposed that Saul, apprized of their designs, would make an attempt to

25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let ^ahim down by the wall, in a basket.

26 And when Saul was come ^bto Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were

^a Jos. 2. 15.

^b Gal. 1. 18.

escape, they stationed guards at the gates to intercept him. In 2 Cor. xi. 32, it is said that the *governor* kept the city for the purpose of apprehending him. It is possible that the governor might have been a Jew, and one, therefore, who would enter into their views. Or if not a Jew, the Jews who were there might easily represent Saul as an offender, and demand his being secured; and thus a garrison or guard might be furnished them for their purpose. See a similar attempt made by the Jews recorded in Matt. xxviii. 14.

25. Took him by night, &c. This was done through a window in the wall. 2 Cor. xi. 33. ¶ *In a basket.* This word is used to denote commonly the basket in which food was carried. Matt. xv. 37. Mark viii. 8. 20. This conduct of Saul was in accordance with the direction of the Lord Jesus (Matt. x. 23), "When they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another," &c. Saul was certain of death if he remained; and as he could secure his life by flight without abandoning any principle of religion, or denying his Lord, it was his duty to do so. Christianity requires us to sacrifice our lives only when we cannot avoid it without denying the Saviour, or abandoning the principles of our holy religion.

26. Was come to Jerusalem. It is probable that he then went immediately to Jerusalem. Gal. i. 18. This was three years after his conversion. ¶ *He assayed.* He attempted; he endeavoured. ¶ *To join himself.* To become connected with them as their fellow-Christian. ¶ *But they were all afraid of him.* Their fear, or suspicion, was excited probably on these grounds: (1.) They remembered his former violence against Christians. They had an instinctive shrinking from him, and suspicion of the man that had been so violent a persecutor. (2.) He had been absent three years. If they had not heard of him during that time, they would naturally retain much of their old feelings towards him. If they had, they might suspect the man who had not returned to Jerusalem; who had not before sought the society of other Christians; and who had spent that time in a distant country,

all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

27 But Barnabas ^ctook him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he

^c c. 4. 36.

and among strangers. It would seem remarkable that he had not at once returned to Jerusalem and connected himself with the apostles. But the sacred writer does not justify the fears of the apostles. He simply records the *fact* of their apprehension. It is not unnatural, however, to have doubts respecting an open and virulent enemy of the gospel who suddenly professes a change in favour of it. The human mind does not easily cast off suspicion of some unworthy motive, and open itself at once to entire confidence. When great and notorious sinners profess to be converted—men who have been violent, or artful, or malignant—it is natural to ask whether they have not some unworthy motive still in their professed change. Confidence is a plant of slow growth, and starts up not by a sudden profession, but by a course of life which is *worthy* of affection and of trust. ¶ *A disciple.* A sincere Christian.

27. But Barnabas. See Note, ch. iv. 35. Barnabas was of Cyprus, not far from Tarsus, and it is not improbable that he had been before acquainted with Saul. ¶ *To the apostles.* To Peter and James. Gal. i. 18, 19. Probably the other apostles were at that time absent from Jerusalem. ¶ *And declared unto them, &c.* It may seem remarkable that the apostles at Jerusalem had not before heard of the conversion of Saul. The following considerations may serve in some degree to explain this. (1.) It is certain that intercourse between different countries was then much more difficult than it is now. There were no posts; no public conveyances; nothing that corresponded with our modes of intercourse between one part of the world and another. (2.) There was at this time a state of animosity amounting to hostility subsisting between Herod and Aretas. Herod the tetrarch had married the daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia, and had put her away. (Josephus, Antiq. b. xviii. ch. v. § 1, 2.) The result of this was a long misunderstanding between them, and a war; and the effects of that war might have been to interrupt the communication very much throughout all that country. (3.) Though the Jews at

had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly ^a at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

23 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.

29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and dis-

a ver. 20, 22.

Jerusalem *might* have heard of the conversion of Saul, yet it was for their interest to keep it a secret, and not to mention it to Christians. But, (4.) Though the Christians who were there *had* heard of it, yet it is probable that they were not fully informed on the subject; that they had not had all the evidence of his conversion which they desired; and that they looked with suspicion on him. It was therefore proper that they should have a *full* statement of the evidence of his conversion; and this was made by Barnabas.

28. *And he was with them, &c.* That is, he was admitted to their friendship, and recognised as a Christian and an apostle. The *time* during which he then remained at Jerusalem was, however, only fifteen days. Gal. i. 18.

29 *And spake boldly.* He openly defended the doctrine that Jesus was the Messiah. ¶ *In the name, &c.* By the authority of the Lord Jesus. ¶ *Against the Grecians.* See the word *Grecians* explained in the note on Acts vi. 1. It means that he not only maintained that Jesus was the Christ in the presence of those Jews who resided at Jerusalem, and who spoke the Hebrew language, but also before those *foreign* Jews, who spoke the Greek language, and who had come up to Jerusalem. They would be as much opposed to the doctrine that Jesus was the Christ, as those who resided in Jerusalem. ¶ *They went about.* They sought to slay him; or they formed a purpose or plan to put him to death as an apostate. See ver. 23.

30. *To Cesarea.* Note ch. viii. 40. ¶ *And sent him forth to Tarsus.* This was his native city. Note ver. 11. It was in Cilicia, where Paul doubtless preached the gospel. Gal. i. 21, "Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia."

31. *Then had the churches rest.* That is, the persecutions against Christians ceased. Those persecutions had been excited by the opposition made to Stephen (Acts xi. 19); they had been greatly promoted by Saul (Acts viii. 1); and had extended doubtless throughout the

puted against the Grecians: but ^b they went about to slay him.

30 *Which* when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Cesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

31 Then ^c had the churches rest ^d

b ver. 23.

c Zec. 9. 1. c. 8. 1.

d Ps. 94. 13.

whole land of Palestine. The precise causes of this cessation of the persecution are not known. Probably they were the following. (1.) It is not improbable that the great mass of Christians had been driven into other regions by these persecutions. (2.) He who had been most active in exciting the persecution, who was, in a sort, its leader, and who was best adapted to carry it on, had been converted. He had ceased his opposition; and even he now was removed from Judea. All this would have some effect in causing the persecution to subside. (3.) But it is not improbable that the civil state of things in Judea contributed much to turn the attention of the Jews to other matters. Dr. Lardner accounts for this in the following manner. "Soon after Caligula's accession, the Jews at Alexandria suffered very much from the Egyptians in that city, and at length their oratories there were all destroyed. In the third year of Caligula, A. D. 39, Petronius was sent into Syria, with orders to set up the emperor's statue in the temple at Jerusalem. This order from Caligula was, to the Jews, a thunder-stroke. The Jews must have been too much engaged after this to mind any thing else, as may appear from the accounts which Philo and Josephus have given us of this affair. Josephus says, 'That Caligula ordered Petronius to go with an army to Jerusalem, to set up his statue in the temple there; enjoining him if the Jews opposed it to put to death all who made any resistance, and to make all the rest of the nation slaves. Petronius, therefore marched from Antioch into Judea, with three legions and a large body of auxiliaries raised in Syria. *All were hereupon filled with consternation*, the army being come as far as Ptolemais.'" See Lardner's Works, vol. i. p. 101, 102. Lond. Ed 1829. Philo gives the same account of the consternation as Josephus. Philo de legat. ad Cai. p. 1024, 1025. He describes the Jews "as abandoning their cities, villages, and open country, as going to Petronius in Phenicia, both men

throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; ^a and walking ^b in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort ^c of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.^d

32 And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all *quarters*, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.

33 And there he found a certain

^a Ro. 14. 19. ^b Ps. 86. 11. Col. 1. 10. ^c Jno. 14. 16, 17. ^d Zec. 8. 20. 22.

and women, the old, the young, the middle aged; as throwing themselves on the ground before Petronius with weeping and lamentation," &c. The effect of this consternation in diverting their minds from the Christians can be easily conceived. The prospect that the images of the Roman emperor were about to be set up by violence in the temple, or, that in case of resistance, death or slavery was to be their portion; the advance of a large army to execute that purpose; all tended to throw the nation into alarm. By the providence of God, therefore, this event was permitted to occur to divert the attention of bloody-minded persecutors from a feeble and a bleeding church. Anxious for their own safety, the Jews would cease to persecute the Christians, and thus by the conversion of the main instrument in persecution, and by the universal alarm for the welfare of the nation, the trembling and enfeebled church was permitted to obtain repose. Thus ended the *first* general persecution against Christians, and thus effectually did God show that he had power to guard and protect his chosen people. ¶ *All Judea*, &c. These three places included the land of Palestine. See Note on Matt. i. 22. The formation of churches in Galilee is not expressly mentioned before this; but there is no improbability in supposing that Christians had travelled there, and had preached the gospel. Comp. Acts xi. 19. The formation of churches in Samaria is expressly mentioned. ch. viii. ¶ *Were edified*. Were built up, increased, and strengthened. See Rom. xiv. 19; xv. 2. 1 Cor. viii. 1. ¶ *And walking*. Proceeding. Living. The word is often used to denote Christian conduct, or manner of life. Col. i. 10. Luke i. 6. 1 Thess. v. 1. 1 John ii. 6. The idea is, that of *travellers* who are going to any place, and who walk in the right path. Christians are thus travellers to another country, an heavenly. ¶ *In the*

man named Eneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.

34 And Peter said unto him, Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee ^e whole; arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

35 And all that dwelt in Lydda ^f and ^g Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

^e c. 3. 6, 16; 4. 10. ^f 1 Ch. 5. 16. ^g c. 11. 21. 2 Cor. 3. 16.

fear of the Lord. Fearing the Lord; with reverence for him and his commandments. This expression is often used to denote piety in general. 2 Chron. xix. 7. Job xxviii. 28. Ps. xix. 9; cxi. 10; Prov. i. 7; ix. 10; iii. 13. ¶ *In the comfort of the Holy Ghost*. In the consolations which the Holy Ghost produced. John xiv. 16, 17. Rom. v. 1—5. ¶ *Were multiplied*. Were increased.

32. *To the saints*. To the Christians. ¶ *Which dwelt at Lydda*. This town was situated on the road from Jerusalem to Cesarea Philippi. It was about fifteen miles east of Joppa, and belonged to the tribe of Ephraim. It was called by the Greeks Diospolis, or city of Jupiter, probably because a temple was at some period erected to Jupiter in that city. It is now so entirely ruined as to be a miserable village. Since the crusades, it has been called by the Christians St. George, on account of its having been the scene of the martyrdom of a saint of that name. Tradition says that in this city the emperor Justinian erected a church.

33. *Eneas*. This is a Greek name; and probably he was a Hellenist. Note ch. vi. 1. ¶ *Sick of the palsy*. See Note, Matt. iv. 24.

34. *Maketh thee whole*. Cures thee. Peter claimed no power to do it himself. Comp. ch. iii. 6. 16; iv. 10. ¶ *Make thy bed*. This would show that he was truly healed. Comp. Matt. ix. 6. Luke ii. 9. 11. John v. 11, 12.

35. *And all*. The mass, or body of the people. The affliction of the man had been long, and was probably well known; the miracle would be celebrated, and the effect was an extensive revival of religion. ¶ *Saron*. This was the *champaign*, or open country, usually mentioned by the name of *Sharon* in the Old Testament. 1 Chron. v. 16; xxvii. 29. Cant. ii. 1. Isa. xxx. 9. It was a region of extraordinary fertility, and the name was almost proverbial to denote

36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called 'Dorcas: this woman was full ^a of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom, when they had washed, they laid *her* in an upper chamber.

33 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they

¹ or, *Doe*, or, *Roe*.

^a 1 Tim. 2. 10. Tit. 2. 7.

any country of great beauty and fertility. Comp. Isa. xxx. 9; xxxv. 2; lxx. 10. It was situated south of mount Carmel, along the coast of the Mediterranean, extending to Cesarea and Joppa. Lydda was situated in this region. ¶ *Turned to the Lord*. Were converted; or received the Lord Jesus as the Messiah. ch. xi. 21. 2 Cor. iii. 16.

36. *At Joppa*. This was a seaport town situated on the Mediterranean, in the tribe of Dan, about thirty miles south of Cesarea, and forty-five northwest of Jerusalem. It was the principal seaport of Palestine; and hence, though the harbour was poor, it had considerable celebrity. It was occupied by Solomon to receive the timber brought for the building of the temple from Tyre (2 Chron. iii. 16), and was used for a similar purpose in the time of Ezra. Ezra iii. 7. The present name of the town is *Jaffa*. It is situated on a promontory jutting out into the sea, rising to the height of about one hundred and fifty feet above its level, and offering on all sides picturesque and varied prospects. The streets are narrow, uneven, and dirty. The inhabitants are estimated at between four and five thousand, of whom the greater part are Turks and Arabs. The Christians are stated to be about six hundred, consisting of Roman Catholics, Greeks, Maronites, and Arminians. It is several times mentioned in the New Testament. Acts x. 5. 23; xi. 5. ¶ *Tabitha*. This word is properly Syriac, and means literally the *gazelle* or *antelope*. The name became an appellation of a female probably on account of the beauty of its form. "It is not unusual in the East to give the names of beautiful animals to young women." (Clark.) Comp. Cant. ii. 9; iv. 5. ¶ *Dorcas*. A Greek word signifying the same as *Tabitha*. Our word *doe* or *roe* answers to it in signification. ¶ *Full of good works*. Distinguished for good works.

sent unto him two men, desiring *him* that he would not ² delay to come to them.

39 Then Peter arose, and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while ^b she was with them.

40 But Peter put ^c them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed: and turning *him* to the body, said, *Tabitha*,

² or, *be grieved*.

^b Ec. 9. 11.

^c Matt. 9. 25.

Comp. 1 Tim. ii. 10. Titus ii. 7. ¶ *And almsdeeds*. Acts of kindness to the poor.

37. *Whom, when they had washed*. Among most people it has been customary to wash the body before it is buried or burned. They prepared her in the usual manner for interment. ¶ *In an upper chamber*. See Note, Acts i. 13. There is no evidence that they expected that Peter would raise her up to life.

38. *Was nigh unto Joppa*. It was about six miles. ¶ *They sent unto him, &c.* Why they sent is not affirmed. It is probable that they desired his presence to comfort and sustain them in their affliction. It is certainly *possible* that they expected he would restore her to life; but as this is not mentioned; as the apostles had as yet raised up no one from the dead; as even Stephen had not been restored to life; we have no authority for assuming, or supposing, that they had formed any such expectation.

39. *Then Peter arose*. See Note on Luke xv. 18. ¶ *And all the widows*. Whom Dorcas had benefited by her kindness. They had lost a benefactress; and it was natural that they should recall her kindness, and express their gratitude by enumerating the proofs of her beneficence. Each one would therefore naturally dwell on the kindness which had been shown to herself.

40. *But Peter put them all forth*. From the room. See a similar case in Matt. ix. 25. Why this was done is not said. Perhaps because he did not wish to appear as if seeking publicity. If done in the presence of many persons, it might seem like ostentation. Others suppose it was that he might offer more fervent and agonizing prayer to God than he would be willing they should witness. Compare 2 Kings iv. 33. ¶ *Tabitha, arise*. Comp. Mark v. 41, 42.

bitha, * arise. And she opened her eyes : and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

41 And he gave her *his* hand, and lift her up : and when he had called the saints and widows, he ^b presented her alive.

42 And it was known throughout

a Mar. 5. 41, 42. Jno. 11. 43.

b 1 Ki. 17. 23.

41. *He presented her alive.* He exhibited, or showed her to them alive. Comp. 1 Kings xvii. 23.

42. *And many believed, &c.* A similar effect followed when Jesus raised up Lazarus. See John xii. 11.

This was the first miracle of this kind that was performed by the apostles. The effect was that many believed. It was not merely a work of benevolence, in restoring to life one who contributed largely to the comfort of the poor, but it was used as a means of extending and establishing, as it was designed doubtless to do, the kingdom of the Saviour.

CHAPTER X.

THIS chapter commences a very important part of the history of the transactions of the apostles. Before this, they had preached the gospel to the Jews only. They seemed to have retained the feelings of their countrymen on this subject, that the Jews were to be regarded as the peculiarly favoured people, and that salvation was not to be offered beyond the limits of their nation. It was important, indeed, that the gospel should be offered to them first ; but the whole tendency of the Christian religion was to enlarge and liberalize the mind ; to overcome the narrow policy and prejudices of the Jewish people ; and to diffuse itself over all the nations of the earth. In various ways, and by various parables, the Saviour had taught the apostles, indeed, that his gospel should be spread among the Gentiles. He had commanded them to go and preach it to every creature. Mark xvi. 15. But he had told them to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. Luke xxiv. 49. It was natural, therefore, that they should receive *special* instructions and divine revelation on a point so important as this ; and God selected the case of Cornelius as the instance by which he would fully establish his purpose of conveying the gospel to the Gentile world. It is worthy of observation, also, that he selected *Peter* for the purpose of conveying the gospel first to the Gentiles. The Saviour had told him that on him he would build his

all Joppa ; and * many believed in the Lord.

43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa, with one Simon a tanner.

CHAPTER X.

THERE was a certain man in Cesarea, called Cornelius, a

c Jno. 12. 11.

church ; that he would give to him first the key of the kingdom of heaven ; that is, that he should be the agent in opening the doors of the church to both Jews and Gentiles. See Notes on Matt. xvi. 18, 19. Peter had, in accordance with these predictions, been the agent in first presenting the gospel to the Jews (Acts ii.) ; and the prediction was now to be *completely* fulfilled in extending the same gospel to the Gentile world. The transaction recorded in this chapter, is one, therefore, that is exceedingly important in the history of the church ; and we are not to be surprised that it is recorded at length. It should be remembered, also, that this point became afterwards the source of incessant controversy in the early church. The converts from Judaism insisted on the observance of the whole of the rites of their religion ; the converts from among the Gentiles claimed exemption from them all. To settle these disputes, and to secure the reception of the gospel among the Gentiles, and to introduce them to the church with all the privileges of the Jews, required all the wisdom, talent, and address of the apostles. See Acts xi. 1—18 ; xv. Rom. xiv. xv. Gal. ii. 11—16.

1. *In Cesarea.* Note, ch. viii. 40. ¶ *Cornelius.* This is a Latin name, and shows that the man was doubtless a Roman. It has been supposed by many interpreters that this man was "a proselyte of the gate;" that is, one who had renounced idolatry, and who observed some of the Jewish rites, though not circumcised, and not called a Jew. But there is no sufficient evidence of this. The reception of the narrative of Peter (ch. xi. 1—3), shows that the other apostles regarded him as a Gentile. In ch. x. 28, Peter evidently regards him as a foreigner ; one who did not in any sense esteem himself to be a Jew. In ch. xi. 1, it is expressly said that "*the Gentiles*" had received the word of God ; evidently alluding to Cornelius and those who were with him. ¶ *A centurion.* One who was the commander of a division in the Roman army, consisting of a hundred men. A captain of a hundred. Note, Matt. viii. 5. ¶ *Of the band.* A division

centurion of the band called the Italian band,

2 A devout ^a man, and one that feared ^b God with all ^c his house, which gave much alms to ^d the people, and prayed ^e to God alway.

^a c. 8. 2; 22. 12. ^b Ec. 7. 18. ^c Gen. 18. 19. Ps. 101. 2-7. c. 18. 8. ^d Ps. 41. 1.

of the Roman army, consisting of from four hundred to six hundred men. Note, Matt. xxvii. 27. ¶ *The Italian band.* Probably a band or regiment that was composed of soldiers from *Italy*, in distinction from those which were composed of soldiers born in provinces. It is evident that many of the soldiers in the Roman army would be those who were born in other parts of the world; and it is altogether probable that those who were born in Rome or Italy would claim pre-eminence over those enlisted in other places.

2. A devout man. Pious; or one who maintained the worship of God. See Note, Luke ii. 25. Comp. Acts ii. 5; viii. 2. ¶ *And one that feared God.* This is often a designation of piety. Note, ch. ix. 31. It has been supposed by many that the expressions here used denote that Cornelius was a Jew, or was instructed in the Jewish religion, and was a proselyte. But this by no means follows. It is probable that there might have been among the Gentiles a few at least who were fearers of God, and who maintained his worship according to the light which they had. So there may be now persons found in pagan lands, who, in some unknown way, have been taught the evils of idolatry; the necessity of a purer religion; and who may be prepared to receive the gospel. The Sandwich Islands were very much in this state when the American missionaries first visited them. They had thrown away their idols, and seemed to be waiting for the message of mercy and the word of eternal life, as Cornelius was. A few other instances have been found by missionaries in heathen lands, who have thus been prepared by a train of providential events, or by the teaching of the Spirit, for the gospel of Christ. ¶ *With all his house.* With all his family. It is evident here that Cornelius instructed his family, and exerted his influence to train them in the fear of God. True piety will always lead a man to seek the salvation of his family. ¶ *Much alms.* Large and liberal charity. This is always an effect of piety. See James i. 27. Ps. xli. 1. ¶ *Prayed to God alway.* Constantly; meaning that he was in the regular habit of praying to

3 He saw in a vision evidently, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel ^f of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.

4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it,

^e Ps. 119. 2. Pr. 2. 3-5. ^f Heb. 1. 14.

God. Comp. Rom. xii. 12. Luke xviii. 1. Ps. cxix. 2. Prov. ii. 2-5. As no particular kind of prayer is mentioned except secret prayer, we are not authorized to affirm that he offered prayer in any other manner. It may be observed, however, that he who prays in secret will usually pray in his family; and as the family of Cornelius is mentioned as being also under the influence of religion, it is perhaps not a forced inference that he observed family worship.

3. He saw in a vision. See Note, ch. ix. 10. ¶ *Evidently.* Openly; manifestly. ¶ *About the ninth hour.* About three o'clock, P. M. This was the usual hour of evening worship among the Jews. ¶ *An angel of God.* Note, Matt. i. 20. Comp. Heb. i. 14. This angel was sent to signify to Cornelius that his alms were accepted by God as an evidence of his piety, and to direct him to send for Peter to instruct him in the way of salvation. The importance of the occasion—the introduction of the gospel to a Gentile, and hence to the entire Gentile world—was probably the chief reason why an angel was commissioned to visit the Roman centurion. Comp. ch. xvi. 9, 10.

4. And when he looked on him. Greek, Having fixed his eyes attentively on him. ¶ *He was afraid.* At the suddenness and unexpected character of the vision. ¶ *What is it, Lord?* This is the expression of surprise and alarm. The word *Lord* should have been translated *sir*, as there is no evidence that this is an address to God, and still less that he regarded the personage present as the Lord. It is such language as a man would naturally use who was suddenly surprised; who should witness a strange form appearing unexpectedly before him; and who should exclaim, 'Sir, what is the matter?' ¶ *Are come up for a memorial.* Are remembered before God. Comp. Isa. xlv. 19. They were an evidence of piety towards God, and were accepted as such. Though he had not offered sacrifice according to the Jewish laws; though he had not been circumcised; yet, having acted according to the light which he had, his prayers were heard, and his alms

Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial ^a before God.

5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for *one* Simon, whose surname is Peter.

6 He lodgeth with one Simon ^b a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side: he shall tell thee ^c what thou oughtest to do.

7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was depart-

^a Isa. 45. 19.

^b c. 9. 43.

^c c. 11. 14.

accepted. This was done in accordance with the general principle of the divine administration, that God prefers the offering of the *heart* to external forms; the expressions of love, to sacrifice without it. This he had often declared. Isa. i. 11—15. Amos v. 21, 22. 1 Sam. xv. 22, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of rams." Hos. vi. 6. Eccl. v. 1. It should be remembered, however, that Cornelius was not depending on external morality. His *heart* was in the work of *religion*. It should be remembered, further, that he was ready to receive *the gospel* when it was offered to him, and to become a Christian. In this there was an important difference between him and those who are depending for salvation on their morality in Christian lands. Such men are apt to defend themselves by the example of Cornelius, and to suppose that as *he* was accepted *before* he embraced the gospel, so they may be *without* embracing it. But there is an important difference in the two cases. For, (1.) There is no evidence that Cornelius was depending on *external morality* for salvation. His offering was that of the *heart*, and not merely an external offering. Moral men in Christian lands depend on their *external morality* in the sight of men. But God looks upon the heart. (2.) Cornelius did not rely on his *morality* at all. His was a work of *religion*. He feared God; he prayed to him; he exerted his influence to bring his *family* to the same state. Moral men do neither. "All their works they do to be seen of men;" and in their heart there is "no good thing towards the Lord God of Israel." Comp. 1 Kings xiv. 13. 2 Chron. xix. 3. Who hears of a man that "fears God," and that prays, and that instructs his household in *religion*, that *depends* on his *morality* for salvation? (3.) Cornelius was disposed to do the will of God as far

ed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually:

8 And when he had declared all *these* things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went ^a up upon the house-top to pray, about the sixth hour:

^d c. 11. 5, &c.

as it was made known to him. Where this exists there is religion. The moral man is not. (4.) Cornelius was willing to embrace a Saviour when he was made known to him. The moral man is not. He hears of a Saviour with unconcern; he listens to the message of God's mercy from year to year without embracing it. In all this there is an important difference between him and the Roman centurion; and while we hope there may be many in pagan lands who are in the same state of mind that he was—disposed to do the will of God as far as made known, and therefore accepted and saved by his mercy in the Lord Jesus—yet this cannot be adduced to encourage the hope of salvation in those who *do* know his will, and yet will not do it.

6. *He lodgeth.* He remains as a guest at his house. See ch. ix. 43. ¶ *By the seaside.* Joppa was a seaport on the Mediterranean. Tanneries are erected on the margin of streams, or of any body of water, to convey away the filth produced in the operation of dressing skins.

7. *A devout soldier.* A pious man. This is an instance of the effect of piety in a military officer. Few men have more influence; and in this case the effect was seen not only in the piety of his family, but of this attending soldier. Such men have usually been supposed to be far from the influence of religion; but this instance shows that even the labours and disadvantages of a camp are not necessarily hostile to the existence of piety. Comp. Luke iii. 14.

8. *And when, &c.* "It has been remarked that from Joppa, Jonah was sent to preach to the Gentiles at Nineveh; and that from the same place Peter was sent to preach to the Gentiles at Cesarea." (Clark.)

9. *Peter went up, &c.* The small room in the second story, or on the roof of the

10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,

11 And saw ^a heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet,

a c.7.56. Re.19.11.

house, was the usual place for retirement and prayer. See Note, Matt. vi. 6; ix. 1. ¶ *About the sixth hour.* About twelve o'clock at noon. The Jews had two stated seasons of prayer—morning, and evening. But it is evident that the more pious of the Jews frequently added a *third* season of devotion probably at noon. Thus David says (Ps. lv. 17), "Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud." Thus Daniel "kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed." Dan. vi. 10. 13. It was also customary in the early Christian church to offer prayer at the third, sixth, and ninth hours. (Clem. Alex. as quoted by Doddridge.) Christians will, however, have not merely *stated* seasons for prayer, but they will seize upon moments of leisure, and when their feelings strongly incline them to it, to pray.

10. *And he became very hungry.* From the connexion, where it is said, that they were making ready, that is, preparing a meal, it would seem that this was the customary hour of dining. The Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans, however, had but two meals, and the first was usually taken about ten or eleven o'clock. This meal usually consisted of fruit, milk, cheese, &c. Their principal meal was about six or seven in the afternoon; at which time they observed their feasts. See Jahn's Bib. Archæ. § 145. ¶ *He fell into a trance.* Greek, an ecstasy, ἐκστασις, fell upon him. In ch. xi. 5, Peter says that in a trance he saw a vision. The word *trance*, or *ecstasy*, denotes a state of mind when the attention is absorbed in a particular train of thought, so that the external senses are partially or entirely suspended. It is a high species of abstraction from external objects; when the mind becomes forgetful of surrounding things, and is fixed solely on its own thoughts, so that appeals to the external senses do not readily rouse it. The soul seems to have passed out of the body, and to be conversant only with spiritual essences. Thus Balaam is said to have seen the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance (Num. xxiv. 4. 16);

knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth;

12 Wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

13 And there came a voice to

thus Paul, in praying in the temple, fell into a trance (Acts xxii. 17); and perhaps a similar state is described in 2 Cor. xii. 2. This effect seems to be caused by so intense and absorbing a train of thought, as to overcome the senses of the body; or wholly to withdraw the mind from their influence, and to fix it on the unseen object that engrosses it. It is often a high state of *revery*, or absence of mind, which Dr. Rush describes as "induced by the stimulus of ideas of absent subjects, being so powerful as to destroy the perception of present objects." (*Discases of the Mind*, p. 310, Ed. Phila. 1812.) In the case of Peter, however, there was a supernatural influence that drew his attention away from present objects.

11. *And saw heaven opened.* ch. viii. 56. Note, Matt. iii. 16. This *language* is derived from a common mode of speaking in the Hebrew scriptures, as if the sky above us was a solid, vast expanse, and if it were *opened* to present an opportunity for any thing to descend. It is language that is highly figurative. ¶ *And a certain vessel.* See Note on ch. ix. 15. ¶ *As it had been.* It is important to mark this expression. The sacred writer does not say that Peter literally saw such an object descending; but he uses this as an imperfect description of the vision. It was not a literal descent of a vessel, but it was such a kind of representation to him, producing the same impression, and the same effect, *as if* such a vessel had descended. ¶ *Knit at the four corners.* Bound, united, or tied. The corners were collected, as would be natural in putting any thing into a great sheet.

12. *Wherein, &c.* This particular vision was suggested by Peter's hunger. ver. 10. It was designed, however, to teach him an important lesson in regard to the introduction of all nations to the gospel. Its descending from heaven may have been an intimation, that that religion which was about to abolish the distinction between the Jews and other nations was of divine origin. See Rev. xxi. 2.

him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.

14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is ^a common or unclean.

15 And the voice *spake* unto him again the second time, What God

^a Le. 11.2, &c. 20.25 De. 14.3, &c. Ez. 4.14.

14. *I have never eaten, &c.* In the Old Testament God had made a distinction between clean and unclean animals. See Lev. xi. 2—27. Dent. xiv. 3—20. This law remained in the Scriptures, and Peter plead that he *had* never violated it, implying that he could not now violate it, as it was a law of God, and as it was unrepealed, he did not dare to act in a different manner from what it required. Between that law, and the command which he now received in the vision, there was an apparent variation, and Peter naturally referred to the well-known and admitted written law. One design of the vision was to show him that that law was now to pass away. ¶ *That is common.* This word properly denotes *that which pertains to all*, but among the Jews, who were bound by special laws, and who were prohibited from many things that were freely indulged in by other nations, the word *common* came to be opposed to the word *sacred*, and to denote that which was in common use among the heathens, hence that which was *profane*, or *polluted*. Here it means the same as *profane*, or *forbidden*. ¶ *Unclean.* Ceremonially unclean; i. e. that which is forbidden by the ceremonial law of Moses.

15. *What God hath cleansed.* What God hath pronounced or declared pure. If God has commanded you to do a thing, it is not impure or wrong. Its use is lawful if he has commanded it. Perhaps Peter would have supposed that the design of this vision was to instruct him, that the distinction between clean and unclean food, as recognised by the Jews, was about to be abolished, ver. 17. But the result showed that it had a higher, and more important design. It was to show him, that they who had been esteemed by the Jews as unclean or profane—the entire Gentile world—might now be admitted to similar privileges with the Jews. That barrier was to be broken down, and the whole world was to be admitted to the same fellowship and privileges in the gospel. See Eph. ii. 14. Gal. iii. 28. It was also true that the ceremonial laws of the Jews in re-

gard to clean and unclean beasts was to pass away, though this was not directly taught in this vision. But when once the barrier was removed that separated the Jews and Gentiles, all the laws which *supposed* such a distinction, and which were framed to *keep up* such a distinction, passed away of course. The ceremonial laws of the Jews were designed *solely* to keep up the distinction between them and other nations. When the distinction was abolished; when other nations were to be admitted to the same privileges, the laws which were made to keep up such a difference received their death-blow, and expired of course. For it is a maxim of all law, that when the *reason* why a law was made ceases to exist, the law becomes obsolete. Yet it was not easy to convince the Jews that their laws ceased to be binding. This point the apostles laboured to establish; and from this point arose most of the difficulties between the Jewish and Gentile converts to Christianity. See Acts xv. and Rom. xiv. xv.

16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

17 Now while Peter doubted in

^b Matt. 15. 11. ver. 28. Ro. 14. 14, &c. 1 Cor. 10. 25. 1 Ti. 4. 4.

gard to clean and unclean beasts was to pass away, though this was not directly taught in this vision. But when once the barrier was removed that separated the Jews and Gentiles, all the laws which *supposed* such a distinction, and which were framed to *keep up* such a distinction, passed away of course. The ceremonial laws of the Jews were designed *solely* to keep up the distinction between them and other nations. When the distinction was abolished; when other nations were to be admitted to the same privileges, the laws which were made to keep up such a difference received their death-blow, and expired of course. For it is a maxim of all law, that when the *reason* why a law was made ceases to exist, the law becomes obsolete. Yet it was not easy to convince the Jews that their laws ceased to be binding. This point the apostles laboured to establish; and from this point arose most of the difficulties between the Jewish and Gentile converts to Christianity. See Acts xv. and Rom. xiv. xv.

16. *This was done thrice.* Three times, doubtless to impress the mind of Peter with the certainty and importance of the vision. Comp. Gen. xli. 32.

17. *Doubted in himself.* Doubted in his own mind. He was perplexed to understand it. ¶ *Behold the men, &c.* We see here an admirable arrangement of the events of Providence to fit each other. Every part of this transaction is made to harmonize with every other part; and it was so arranged, that just in the moment when the mind of Peter was filled with perplexity, that the very event should occur which should relieve him of his embarrassment. Such a coincidence is not uncommon. An event of divine Providence may be as clear an expression of his will, and may as certainly serve to indicate our duty, as the most manifest revelation would do, and a state of mind may, by an arrangement of circumstances, be produced, that shall be extremely perplexing until some event shall occur, or some field of usefulness shall open, that shall exactly correspond to it, and shall indicate to us the will of God. We

himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry^a for Simon's house, and stood before the gate.

18 And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.

19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit^b said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.

20 Arise,^c therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

21 Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come?

22 And they said, Cornelius,^d the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report^e among all the nation of

a 9.43. b c.11.12. c c.15.7. d ver.1,&c. e c.22.12. He.11.2.

should observe then the events of God's providence. We should mark and record the train of our own thoughts, and we should watch with interest any event that occurs, when we are perplexed and embarrassed, to obtain, if possible, an expression of the will of God. ¶ *Before the gate.* The word here rendered "gate," *πυλῶνα*, refers properly to the porch or principal entrance to an eastern house. See Note, Matt. ix. 2; xxvi. 71. It does not mean, as with us, a *gate*, but rather a *door*. See Acts xii. 13.

19. *The Spirit.* See Note, Acts viii. 29. Comp. Isa. lxx. 24. "And it shall come to pass, that before they call I will answer," &c.

22. *To hear words of thee.* To be instructed by thee.

23. *And lodged them.* They remained with him through the night. Four days were occupied before Peter met Cornelius at Cesarea. On the first the angel appeared to Cornelius. On the second the messengers arrived at Joppa, ver. 9. On the third, Peter returned with them, ver. 23; and on the fourth they arrived at Cesarea, ver. 24. 30. ¶ *And certain brethren.* Some Christians. They were six in number, ch. xi. 12. It was usual for the early Christians to accompany the apostles in their journeys. See Rom. xv.

the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel, to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

23 Then called he them in, and lodged *them*. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain^f brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

24 And the morrow after they entered into Cesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.

25 And as Peter was coming in Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped *him*.

26 But Peter took him up, saying,^g Stand up; I myself also am a man.

27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together.

f ver.43. g c.14.14,15. Re.19.10;22.9.

24. Acts xv. 3. 3 John 6. 1 Cor. xvi. 6. 11. As this was an important event in the history of the church—the bearing of the gospel to a Gentile—it was more natural and proper that Peter should be attended with others.

24. *His kinsmen.* His relatives, or the connexions of his family. A man may often do vast good by calling his kindred and friends to hear the gospel.

25. *Fell down at his feet.* This was an act of profound regard for him as an ambassador of God. In oriental countries it was usual to prostrate themselves at length on the ground before men of rank and honour. ¶ *Worshipped him.* This does not mean religious *homage*, but civil respect, the homage, or profound regard which was due to one in honour. See Note, Matt. ii. 2.

26. *Stand up, &c.* This does not imply that Peter supposed that Cornelius intended to do him *religious* reverence. It was practically saying to him, "I am nothing more than a man as thou art, and pretend to no right to such profound respects as these, but am ready in civil life to show thee all the respect that is due." (Doddridge.)

27. *And as he talked with him.* He probably met him at the door, or at a small distance from the house. It was

23 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing ^a for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me ^b that I should not call any man common or unclean.

29 Therefore came I *unto you* without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for. I ask, therefore, for what intent ye have sent for me?

30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house; and, behold, a man stood before me ^c in bright clothing.

31 And said, Cornelius, thy ^d

^a Jno.4.9. ^b c.15.8,9. Ep.3.6. ^c Matt.28.3. c.1.10. ^d ver.4,&c. Da.10.12. He.6.10.

an expression of joy thus to go out to meet him.

28. *It is an unlawful thing.* This was not explicitly enjoined by Moses, but it seemed to be implied in his institutions, and was at any rate the common understanding of the Jews. The design was to keep them a separate people. To do this Moses forbid alliances by contract, or marriage, with the surrounding nations, which were idolatrous. See Lev. xviii. 21—30. Deut. viii. 3—12. Comp. Ezra ix. 11, 12. This command the Jews perverted; and explained as referring to intercourse of all kinds, even to the exercise of friendly offices and commercial transactions. Comp. John iv. 9. ¶ *Of another nation.* Greek, Another tribe. It refers here to all who were not Jews. ¶ *God hath shewed me.* Comp. ch. xv. 8, 9. He had showed him by the vision, ver. 11, 12. ¶ *Any man common or unclean.* See Note, ver. 14. That no man was to be regarded as excluded from the opportunity of salvation; or be despised and abhorred. The gospel was to be preached to all; the barrier between Jews and Gentiles to be broken down; and all were to be regarded as capable of being saved.

29. *Without gainsaying.* Without saying any thing against it; without hesitation or reluctance. ¶ *I ask, therefore, &c.* The main design for which Cornelius had sent for him had been mentioned to Peter by the messenger, ver. 22. But Peter now desired from his own lips a more particular statement of the consi-

deration which had induced him to send for him. ¶ *For what intent.* For what purpose or design.

32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter: he is lodged in the house of *one* Simon a tanner, by the seaside; who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.

33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee: and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now ^e therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

34 Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth, I perceive that God ^f is no respecter of persons:

^e De.5.27. ^f De.10.17. Ch.19.7. Job 34—19. Ro.2.12. Ga.2.6. 1Pe.1.17.

derations which had induced him to send for him. ¶ *For what intent.* For what purpose or design.

30. *Four days ago.* See Note, on ver. 23. ¶ *Until this hour.* The ninth hour, or three o'clock, P. M. See ver. 3. ¶ *A man.* Called, in ver. 3, an angel. He had the appearance of a man. Comp. Mark xvi. 5. ¶ *In bright clothing.* See Note, Matt. xxviii. 3.

33. *Thou hast well done.* This is an expression of grateful feeling. ¶ *Before God.* In the presence of God. It is implied, that they believed that God saw them, and that they were assembled at his command, and that they were disposed to listen to his instructions.

34. *Then Peter opened his mouth.* Began to speak. Matt. v. 2. ¶ *Of a truth.* Truly, evidently. That is, I have evidence here that God is no respecter of persons. ¶ *Is no respecter of persons.* The word used here denotes the act of showing favour to one on account of rank, family, wealth, or partiality, arising from any cause. It is explained in James ii. 1—4. A judge is a respecter of persons when he favours one of the parties on account of private friendship; or because he is a man of rank, influence, or power; or because he belongs to the same political party, &c. The Jews supposed that they were peculiarly favoured by God, and that salvation was not extended to other nations, and that the fact of being a Jew entitled them to this favour. Peter here says that he has learned the error of this doctrine. That a

35 But in ^a every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

^a Rom. 2. 13, 27; 3. 22, 29; 10. 12, 13. Eph. 2. 13-18.

man is not to be *accepted* because he is a Jew, nor is he to be *excluded* because he is a *Gentile*. The barrier is broken down; the offer is made to all; and God will save all on the same principle; not by external privileges, or rank, but according to their character. The same doctrine is elsewhere explicitly stated in the New Testament. Rom. ii. 2. Eph. vi. 9. Col. iii. 25. It may be observed here that this does not refer to the doctrine of divine sovereignty or election. It simply affirms that God will not save a man because he is a Jew; nor because he is rich, or learned, or of elevated rank; nor by any external privileges. Nor will he exclude a man because he is destitute of these privileges. But this does not affirm that he will not make a difference in their character, and then treat them according to their character; nor that he will not pardon whom he pleases, which is a different question. The interpretation of this passage should be limited strictly to the case in hand—to mean that God will not accept and save a man on account of external national rank and privileges. That by receiving some, and leaving others, on other grounds, he will not make a difference, is not any where denied. Comp. 1 Cor. iv. 7. Rom. xii. 6. It is worthy of remark further, that the most strenuous advocate for the doctrines of sovereignty and election in the New Testament—the apostle Paul—is also the one that laboured most to establish the doctrine that God was no respecter of persons, that is, that there was no difference between the Jews and Gentiles in regard to the way of salvation; that God would not save a man because he was a Jew, nor destroy a man because he was a Gentile. Yet in regard to the whole race viewed as lying on a level, he maintained that God had a right to exercise the prerogatives of a sovereign, and to have mercy on whom he would have mercy. The doctrine may be thus stated. (1.) The barrier between the Jews and Gentiles was broken down. (2.) All men thus were placed on a level—none to be saved by external privileges, none to be lost by the want of them. (3.) All were guilty (Rom. i. ii. iii.), and none had a claim on God. (4.) If any were saved, it would be by God's showing mercy on such of this common mass as he chose.

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See Rom. iii. 22; x. 12; ii. 11. Gal. ii. 6. Compared with Rom. ix. and Eph. i.

35. *But in every nation, &c.* This is given as a reason for what Peter had just said, that God was no respecter of persons. The sense is, that he had now perceived that the favours of God were not confined to the Jew, but might be extended to all others on the same principle. The remarkable circumstances here, the vision to him, and to Cornelius, and the declaration that the alms of Cornelius were accepted, now convinced Peter that the favours of God were no longer to be confined to the Jewish people, but might be extended to all. This was what the vision was designed to teach; and to communicate this to the apostles was an important step in their work of spreading the gospel. ¶ *In every nation.* Among all people. Jews or Gentiles. Acceptance with God does not depend on the fact of being descended from Abraham, or of possessing external privileges, but on the state of the heart. ¶ *He that feareth him.* This is put for piety towards God in general. See Note, ch. ix. 31. It means that he that honours God, and keeps his law; that is a true worshipper of God, according to the light and privileges which he has, is approved by him, as giving evidence that he is his friend. ¶ *And worketh righteousness.* Does that which is right and just. This refers to his conduct towards man. He that discharges conscientiously his duty to his fellow-men, and evinces by his conduct that he is a righteous man. These two things comprehend the whole of religion, the sum of all the requirements of God—piety towards God, and justice towards all men; and as Cornelius had showed these, he showed that, though a Gentile, he was actuated by true piety. We may observe here, (1.) That it is not said that Cornelius was accepted on account of his good works. Those works were simply an evidence of true piety in the heart; a proof that he feared and loved God, and not a meritorious ground of acceptance. (2.) He improved the light which he had. (3.) *He embraced the Saviour when he was offered to him.* This circumstance makes an essential difference between the case of Cornelius, and those who depend on their morality in Christian lands. They do not embrace the Lord Jesus, and they

36 The word which *God* sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace ^a by Jesus Christ; (he is ^b Lord of all;)

37 That word, *I say*, ye know, which was published throughout

^a Isa. 57. 19. Col. 1. 20.

^b Ps. 24. 7-10. Matt. 28. 18.

Ro. 14. 9. 1 Cor. 15. 27. Eph. 1. 20-22. 1 Pet. 3. 22. Rev. 17. 14.

are, therefore, totally unlike the Roman centurion. His example should not be plead, therefore, by those who *neglect* the Saviour, for it furnishes no evidence that *they* will be accepted, when they are totally unlike him.

36. *The word.* That is, this is the word, or the doctrine. Few passages in the New Testament have perplexed critics more than this. It has been difficult to ascertain to what the term "word" in the accusative case (τον λόγον) here refers. Our translation would lead us to suppose that it is synonymous with what is said in the following verse. But it should be remarked that the term used there, and translated "word," as if it were a repetition of what is said here, is a different term. It is not λογόν, but ρημα—a word, a thing; not a doctrine. I understand the first term "word" to be an introduction of the doctrine which Peter set forth, and to be governed by a preposition understood. The whole passage may be thus expressed: Peter had been asked to *teach* Cornelius and his assembled friends. It was expected, of course, that he would instruct him in regard to the true doctrines of religion—the doctrine which had been communicated to the Jews. He commences, therefore, with a statement respecting the true doctrine of the Messiah, or the way of salvation which was now made known to the Jews. 'In regard to the *word*, or the doctrine which God sent to the children of Israel, proclaiming peace through Jesus Christ (who is Lord of all), you know already that which was done, or the transactions which occurred throughout all Judea, from Galilee, where he commenced after John had preached, that this was by Jesus Christ, since God had anointed him,' &c. Peter here assumes that Cornelius had some knowledge of the principal events of the life of the Saviour, though it was obscure and imperfect; and his discourse professes only to state this more *fully and clearly*. He commences his discourse with stating the true doctrine on the subject; and explaining more perfectly that of which Cornelius had been

all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached:

38 How God anointed ^c Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who ^d went about doing

^c Lu. 14. 18. Heb. 1. 9.

^d Matt. 12. 15.

only imperfectly informed ¶ *Unto the children of Israel.* To the Jews. The Messiah was promised to them, and spent his life among them. ¶ *Preaching.* That is, proclaiming, or announcing. God did this by Jesus Christ. ¶ *Peace.* This word sometimes refers to the *peace* or union which was made between Jews and Gentiles, by breaking down the wall of division between them. But it is here used in a wider sense, to denote peace or reconciliation with God. He announced the way by which man might be reconciled to God, and might find peace. ¶ *He is Lord of all.* That is, Jesus Christ. He is Sovereign, or Ruler of both Jews and Gentiles; he is their proprietor; and hence Peter saw the propriety of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles as well as Jews. See John xvii. 2. Matt. xxviii. 18. Eph. i. 20-22. This does not necessarily imply divinity; but only that the Lord Jesus, as Mediator, had been constituted or appointed Lord over all nations. It is true, however, that this is a power which we cannot conceive to have been delegated to one that was not divine. Comp. Röm. ix. 5.

37. *That word.* Greek, ρημα—a different word from that in the previous verse. It may be translated *thing* as well as *word*. ¶ *Which was published.* Greek, Which was *done*. 'You know, though it may be imperfectly, what was *done* or accomplished in Judea,' &c. ¶ *Throughout all Judea.* The miracles of Christ were not confined to any place, but were wrought in every part of the land. For an account of the divisions of Palestine, see Notes, Matt. i. 22. ¶ *And began,* &c. Greek, Having been begun in Galilee. Galilee was not far from Cesarea. There was, therefore, the more probability that Cornelius had heard of what had occurred there. Indeed, the Gospels themselves furnish the highest evidence that the fame of the miracles of Christ spread into all the surrounding regions.

38. *How God anointed,* &c. That is, set him apart to this work, and was with him, acknowledging him as the Messiah. See Note, Matt. i. 1. ¶ *With the Holy*

good, and healing all that were oppressed ^a of the devil: for ^b God was with him.

39 And we ^c are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree.

40 Him God raised up ^d the third day, and shewed him openly;

41 Not ^e to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before ^f of

^a 1Jno.3.8. ^b Jno.3.2. ^c Lu.24.48. c.3.32.
^d Matt.28.1,2. ^e Jno.14.22. Jno.c.20 & 21. ^f Jno.15.16.

Ghost. See Note, Luke iv. 19. The act of anointing the kings and priests seems to have been emblematic of the influences of the Holy Ghost. Here it means that God communicated to him the influences of the Holy Spirit, thus setting him apart for the work of the Messiah. See Matt. iii. 16, 17. John iii. 34, "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." ¶ *And with power.* The power of healing the sick, raising the dead, &c. ¶ *Who went about doing good.* Whose main business it was to travel from place to place to do good. He did not go for applause, or wealth, or comfort, or ease, but to diffuse happiness as far as possible. This is the simple but sublime record of his life. This, in few, but most affecting words, tells us all about the Saviour. It gives us a distinct portrait of his character, as he is distinguished from conquerors and kings, and false prophets and the mass of men. ¶ *And healing, &c.* Restoring to health. ¶ *All that were oppressed of the devil.* All that were possessed by him. See Note, Matt. iv. 23, 24. ¶ *God was with him.* God appointed him, and furnished by his miracles the highest evidence that he had sent him. His miracles were such that they could be wrought only by God.

39. *And we are witnesses.* We who are apostles. See Note, Luke xxiv. 48. ¶ *In the land of the Jews.* In the country of Judea. ¶ *Whom they slew, &c.* Our translation would seem to imply that there were two separate acts—first slaying him, and then suspending him. But this is neither according to truth nor to the Greek text. The original is simply, 'whom they put to death, suspending him on a tree.' ¶ *On a tree.* On a cross. See Note, ch. v. 30.

40. *Shewed him openly.* Manifestly;

God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.

42 And he commanded us ^g to preach unto the people, and to testify that ^h it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the Judge of quick and dead.

43 To him ⁱ give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever ^j believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

^g Matt.28.19,20. ^h Jno.5.22,27. c.17.31. 2Cor.5.10.
ⁱ 1Pet.4.5. ^j Lu.24.27,44. Jno.5.39. ^k Jno.3.14-17. Rom.10.11.

so that there could be no deception, no doubt of his resurrection.

41. *Not to all the people.* Not to the nation at large; for this was not necessary in order to establish the truth of his resurrection. He however showed himself to many persons. See the Harmony of the accounts of the resurrection of Jesus at the close of the Notes on Matthew. ¶ *Chosen of God.* Appointed by God, or set apart by his authority through Jesus Christ. ¶ *Who did eat and drink, &c.* And by doing this he furnished the clearest possible proof that he was truly risen; and that they were not deceived by an illusion of the imagination, or by a phantasm. Comp. John xxi. 12, 13.

42. *And he commanded us, &c.* Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. Mark xvi. 15, 16. ¶ *And to testify.* To bear witness. ¶ *That it is he, &c.* See Notes, John v. 22—27. Comp. the references in the margin. ¶ *Of quick. The living.* The doctrine of the New Testament is, that those which are alive when the Lord Jesus shall return to judge the world, shall be caught up in vast numbers like clouds, to meet him in the air, without seeing death. 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17. Yet before this, they shall experience such a *change* in their bodies as shall fit them for the judgment and for their eternal residence—a change which shall liken them to those who have died, and have been raised from the dead. What this change will be, speculation may fancy, but the Bible has not revealed. See 1 Cor. xv. 52, "The dead shall be raised, and we shall be changed."

43. *To him give, &c.* See Note, Luke xxiv. 27. 44. ¶ *That through his name, &c.* This was implied in what the prophets said. See Rom. x. 11. It was not, indeed, expressly affirmed that they who believed in him should be pardoned; but

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost ^a fell on all them which heard the word.

45 And they ^b of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost:

46 For they heard them speak ^c with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

47 Can ^d any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

a c.4.31. b ver.23. c c.2.4. d c.8.12.

this was implied in what they said. They promised a Messiah; and their religion consisted mainly in believing in a Messiah to come. See the reasoning of the apostle Paul in Rom. iv.

44. *The Holy Ghost fell, &c.* Endowing them with the power of speaking with other tongues. ver. 46. Of this the apostle Peter makes much in his argument in ch. xi. 17. By this, 'God showed that the Gentiles were to be admitted to the same privileges with the Jews, and to the blessings of salvation in the same manner. Comp. ch. ii. 1—4. ¶ Which heard the word. The word of God; the message of the gospel.

45. *And they of the circumcision.* Who had been Jews. ¶ Were astonished. Were amazed that Gentiles should be admitted to the same favour as themselves.

46. *Speak with tongues.* In other languages than their native language. ch. ii. 4. ¶ And magnify God. And praise God.

47. *Can any man forbid water, &c.* They have shown that they are favoured in the same way as the Jewish converts. God has manifested himself to them, as he did to the Jews on the day of Pentecost. Is it not clear, therefore, that they are entitled to the privilege of Christian baptism? The expression here used is one that would naturally refer to water's being brought; that is, to a small quantity; and would seem to imply that they were baptized, not by immersion, but by pouring or sprinkling.

48. *And he commanded them, &c.* Why Peter did not himself baptize them is unknown. But it might be, perhaps, because he chose to make use of the ministry of the brethren who were with him, to prevent the possibility of future cavil. If

48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

CHAPTER XI.

AND the apostles and brethren that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.

2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they ^e that were of the circumcision contended with him,

3 Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.

e c.10.23,28. Gal.2.12. c.10.9,&c.

they did it themselves, they could not so easily be led by the Jews to find fault with it. It may be added, also, that it seems not to have been the practice of the apostles themselves to baptize very extensively. This was left to be performed by others. See 1 Cor. i. 14—17, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel."

CHAPTER XI.

1. *And the apostles and brethren.* The Christians who were in Judea. ¶ Heard, &c. So extraordinary an occurrence as that at Cesarea, the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles, and their reception into the church, would excite attention, and be likely to produce much sensibility in regard to the conduct of Peter and those with him. It was so contrary to all the ideas of the Jews, that it is not to be wondered at that it led to contention.

2. *They that were of the circumcision.* The Christians who had been converted from among the Jews. ¶ Contended with him. Disputed; or reproved him; charged him with being in fault. This is one of the circumstances which show conclusively that the apostles and early Christians did not regard Peter as having any particular supremacy over the church, or as being in any peculiar sense the vicar of Christ upon earth. If Peter had been regarded as having the authority which the Roman Catholics claim for him, they would have submitted at once to what he had thought proper to do. But the primitive Christians had no such idea of his authority. This claim for Peter is not only opposed to this place, but to every part of the New Testament.

3. *And didst eat with them.* See Note, ch. x. 13 14

4 But Peter rehearsed *the matter* from the beginning, and expounded *it* by order unto them, saying,

5 I was in the city of Joppa, praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me:

6 Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

7 And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay, and eat.

8 But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth.

9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common.

10 And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven.

a Jno. 16. 13.

b Ps. 19. 7-11. Jno. 6. 63, 68. c c. 2. 4.

4. *But Peter rehearsed.* Greek, Peter beginning, explained it to them in order. That is, he began with the vision which he saw, and gave a narrative of the various events in order, as they actually occurred. A simple and unvarnished statement of *facts* is usually the best way of disarming prejudice and silencing opposition. In revivals of true religion, the best way of silencing opposition, and especially among Christians, is to make a plain statement of things as they actually occurred. Opposition most commonly arises from prejudice, or from false and exaggerated statements; and those can be best removed, not by angry contention, but by an unvarnished relation of the facts. In most cases prejudice will thus be disarmed, and opposition will die away, as was the case in regard to the admission of the Gentiles to the church. ¶ *And expounded it.* Explained it; stated it as it actually occurred. ¶ *In order.* One event after another, as they happened. He thus showed that *his own mind* had been as much biassed as theirs, and stated in what manner his prejudices had been removed. It often happens that those who

11 And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Cesarea unto me.

12 And the Spirit ^a bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover, these six brethren accompanied me; and we entered into the man's house:

13 And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter;

14 Who shall tell thee words ^b whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.

15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as ^c on us at the beginning.

16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John ^d indeed baptized with water; but ^e ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

17 Forasmuch then as God gave ^f them the like gift as *he did* unto

d Matt. 3. 11. Jno. 1. 26, 33. c. 1. 5.

e Isa. 44. 3. Joel

2. 28.

f c. 15. 8, 9.

become most zealous and devoted in any new plans for the advancement of religion, were as much opposed to them at first as others. They are led from one circumstance to another, until their prejudices die away, and the providence and Spirit of God indicate clearly their duty.

5-14. See ch. x. 9-33.

14. *And all thy house.* Thy family. This is a circumstance which is omitted in the account in ch. x. It is said, however, in ch. x. 2, that Cornelius feared God *with all his house*. And it is evident from ch. x. 48, that the family also received the ordinance of baptism, and was received into the church.

15. *And as I began to speak.* Or, while I was speaking. ¶ *The Holy Ghost, &c.* x. 44.

16. *The word of the Lord.* See Note, ch. i. 5.

17. *What was I.* What power or right had I to oppose the manifest will of God that the Gentiles should be received into the Christian church. ¶ *Withstand God.* Oppose or resist God? He had indicated his will; he had showed his intention to save the Gentiles; and the prejudices of

us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what ^a was I, that I could withstand God?

18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also

^a Rom. 9. 21-26.

to the Gentiles ^b granted repentance unto life.

19 Now they ^c which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and

^b Rom. 10. 12, 13; 15. 9, 16.

^c c. 8. 1.

Peter were all overcome. One of the best means of destroying prejudice and false opinions, is a powerful revival of religion. More erroneous doctrines and unholy feelings are overcome in such scenes, than in all the angry controversies, and bigoted and fierce contentions that have ever taken place. If men wish to root error out of the church, they should strive by all means to promote every where, revivals of pure and undefiled religion. The Holy Spirit more easily and effectually silences false doctrine, and destroys heresy, than all the denunciations of fierce theologians; all the alarms of professed zeal for truth; and all the anathemas which professed orthodoxy and love for the purity of the church ever uttered from the icebergs on which such champions usually seek their repose and their home.

18. *They held their peace.* They were convinced, as Peter had been, by the manifest indications of the will of God. ¶ *Then hath God, &c.* The great truth is in this manner established, that the doors of the church are opened to the entire Gentile world—a great and glorious truth, that was worthy of this remarkable interposition. It at once changed the views of the apostles and of the early Christians; gave them new, large, and liberal conceptions of the gospel; broke down all their long-cherished prejudices; taught them to look upon all men as their brethren; and impressed their hearts with the truth, never after to be eradicated, that the Christian church was founded for the wide world, and opened the same glorious pathway to life wherever man might be found, whether with the narrow prejudice of the Jew, or amidst the degradations of the pagan world. To this truth we owe our hopes; for this, we should thank the God of heaven; and impressed with it, we should seek to invite the entire world to partake with us of the rich provisions of the gospel of the blessed God.

19. *Now they, &c.* This verse introduces a new train of historical remark; and from this point the course of the history of the Acts of the Apostles takes a new direction. Thus far, the history had

recorded chiefly the preaching of the gospel to the Jews only. From this point the history records the efforts made to convert the Gentiles. It begins with the labours put forth in the important city of Antioch (ver. 19, 20); and, as during the work of grace that occurred in that city, the labours of the apostle Paul were especially sought (ver. 25, 26), the sacred writer thenceforward confines the history mainly to his travels and labours. ¶ *Which were scattered abroad.* See ch. viii. 1. ¶ *As far as Phenice.* Phœnice, or Phœnicia, was a province of Syria, which in its largest sense comprehended a narrow strip of country lying on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, and extending from Antioch to the borders of Egypt. But Phœnice Proper extended only from the cities of Laodicea to Tyre, and included only the territories of Tyre and Sidon. This country was called sometimes simply *Canaan*. See Note, Matt. xv. 22. ¶ *And Cyprus.* An island off the coast of Asia Minor, in the Mediterranean sea. See Note, Acts iv. 36. ¶ *And Antioch.* There were two cities of this name, one situated in Pisidia in Asia Minor (see ch. xiii. 14); the other, referred to here, was situated on the river Orontes, and was long the capital of Syria. It was built by Seleucus Nicanor, and was called Antioch in honour of his father Antiochus. It was founded three hundred and one years before Christ. It is not mentioned in the Old Testament, but is several times mentioned in the Apocrypha, and in the New Testament. It was long the most powerful city of the East, and was inferior only to Seleucia and Alexandria. It was famous for the fact that the right of citizenship was conferred by Seleucus on the Jews as well as the Greeks and Macedonians, so that here they had the privilege of worship in their own way without molestation. It is probable that the Christians would be regarded merely as a sect of Jews, and would be here suffered to celebrate their worship without interruption. On this account it may have been that the early Christians regarded this city as of such particular importance, because here they could find a refuge from persecution, and be permitted to worship

Antioch, preaching the word to none but ^a unto the Jews only.

20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, ^b preaching the Lord Jesus.

21 And the ^c hand of the Lord was with them: and a great num-

^a Matt. 10. 6.

^b c. 6. 1; 9. 29.

^c Lu. 1. 66.

God without molestation. This city was honoured as a Roman colony, a metropolis, and an asylum. It was large; was almost square; had many gates; was adorned with fine fountains; and was a city of great opulence. It was however subject to earthquakes, and was several times nearly destroyed. In the year 588 it experienced an earthquake in which 60,000 persons were destroyed. It was taken by the Saracens in A. D. 638, and after some changes and revolutions, it was taken during the crusades, after a long and bloody siege, by Godfrey of Bouillon, June 3, A. D. 1098. In 1268 it was taken by the sultan of Egypt, who demolished it, and placed it under the dominion of the Turk. Antioch is now called Antakia, and contains about 10,000 inhabitants. (*Robinson's Calmet*). ¶ *Preaching the word.* The word of God, the gospel. ¶ *To none but unto the Jews only.* They had the common prejudices of the Jews, that the offers of salvation were to be made only to Jews.

20. *Were men of Cyprus and Cyrene.* Were natives of Cyprus and Cyrene. Cyrene was a province and city of Lybia in Africa. It is at present called Cairoan, and is situated in the kingdom of Barca. In Cyprus the Greek language was spoken; and from the vicinity of Cyrene to Alexandria, it is probable that the Greek language was spoken there also. From this circumstance it might have happened that they were led more particularly to address the *Grecians* who were in Antioch. It is possible, however, that they might have heard of the vision which Peter saw, and felt themselves called on to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. ¶ *Spake unto the Grecians,* πρὸς τοῖς Ἑλληνιστάς. To the Hellenists. This word usually denotes in the New Testament those Jews residing in foreign lands, who spoke the Greek language. See Note, ch. vi. 1. But to them the gospel had been already preached; and yet in this place it is evidently the intention of Luke to affirm, that the men

ber believed, and turned ^d unto the Lord.

22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, ^e that he should go as far as Antioch.

23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was

^d c. 15. 19. 1 Th. 1. 9.

^e c. 9. 27.

of Cyprus and Cyrene preached to those who were *not* Jews, and that thus their conduct was distinguished from those (ver. 19) who preached to the Jews only. It is thus manifest that we are here required to understand the *Gentiles*, as those who were addressed by the men of Cyprus and Cyrene. In many MSS. the word used here is Ἑλληνας, *Greeks*, instead of *Hellenists*. This reading has been adopted by Griesbach, and is found in the Syriac, the Arabic, the Vulgate, and in many of the fathers. The *Æthiopic* version reads 'to the Gentiles.' There is no doubt that this is the true reading; and that the sacred writer means to say that the gospel was here preached to those who were not Jews, for all were called *Greeks* by them who were not Jews. Rom. i. 16. The connexion would lead us to suppose that they had heard of what had been done by Peter, and that, imitating his example, they preached the gospel now to the Gentiles also.

21. *And the hand of the Lord.* See Note, Luke i. 66. Comp. Ps. lxxx. 17. The meaning is, that God showed them favour, and evinced his power in the conversion of their hearers.

22. *Then tidings, &c.* The church at Jerusalem heard of this. It was natural that so remarkable an occurrence as the conversion of the Gentiles, and the extraordinary success of the gospel in a splendid and mighty city, should be reported at Jerusalem, and excite deep interest there. ¶ *And they sent forth.* To aid the disciples there, and to give them their sanction. They had done a similar thing in the revival which occurred in Samaria. Note, ch. viii. 14. ¶ *Barnabas.* See ch. iv. 36, 37. He was a native of Cyprus, and was probably well acquainted with Antioch. He was, therefore, peculiarly qualified for the work on which they sent him.

23. *Had seen the grace of God.* The favour, or mercy of God, in converting sinners to himself. ¶ *Was glad.* Approved of what had been done in preach-

glad ^a and exhorted ^b them all, that with purpose ^c of ^d heart they would cleave unto the Lord

24 For he was a good man, and

^a 3Jno. 4. ^b c. 13. 43; 14. 22. ^c Ps. 17. 2. 2Cor. 1. 17. ^d Pr. 23. 15, 26.

full ^e of the Holy Ghost, and of faith; and ^f much people was added unto the Lord.

25 Then ^g departed Barnabas

^e c. 6. 5. ^f ver. 21. ^g c. 9. 27, 30.

ing the gospel to the Gentiles, and rejoiced that God had poured down his Spirit on them. The effect of a revival is to produce joy in the hearts of all those who love the Saviour. ¶ *And exhorted them all.* Entreated them. They would be exposed to many trials and temptations, and he sought to secure their affections in the cause of religion. ¶ *That with purpose of heart.* With a firm mind; with a fixed, settled resolution; that they would make this their settled plan of life, their main object. A *purpose*, *προσθεσις*, is a resolution of the mind, a plan, or intention. Rom. viii. 28. Eph. i. 2; iii. 11. 2 Tim. i. 9; iii. 10. It is a resolution of the mind in regard to future conduct, and the doctrine of Barnabas here was, undoubtedly, that it should be a regular, fixed, determined plan, or design, in their minds, that they would henceforward adhere to God. This plan must be formed by all Christians in the beginning of their Christian life, and without such a plan there can be no evidence of piety. We may also remark that such a plan is one of the heart. It is not simply of the understanding, but is of the entire mind, including the will and affections. It is the leading principle; the strongest affection; the guiding purpose of the will to adhere to God. And unless this is the prevalent, governing desire of the heart, there can be no evidence of conversion. ¶ *That they would cleave.* Greek, That they would remain, i. e. that they would adhere constantly and faithfully attached to the Lord.

24. *For he was a good man.* This is given as a reason why he was so eminently successful. It is not said that he was a man of distinguished talents, or learning; that he was a splendid or an imposing preacher; but simply that he was a pious, humble man of God. He was honest, and devoted to his master's work. We should not undervalue talent, eloquence, or learning in the ministry; but we may remark, that humble piety will often do more in the conversion of souls than the most splendid talents. No endowments can be a substitute for this. The real power of a minister is concentrated in this; and

without this his ministry will be barrenness and a curse. There is nothing on this earth so mighty as *goodness*. If a man wished to make the most of his powers, the true secret would be found in employing them for a good object, and suffering them to be wholly under the direction of benevolence. John Howard's purpose to *do good* has made a more permanent impression on the interests of the world than the mad ambition of Alexander or Cæsar. Perhaps the expression, "he was a good man," means that he was a man of a kind, amiable, and sweet disposition. ¶ *Full of the Holy Ghost.* Was entirely under the influence of the Holy Spirit. He was eminently a pious man. This is the *second* qualification here mentioned of a good minister. He was not merely exemplary for mildness and kindness of temper, but he was eminently a man of God. He was filled with the influences of the sacred Spirit, producing zeal, love, peace, joy, &c. See Gal. v. 22, 23. Comp. Acts ii. 4, Note. ¶ *And of faith.* Confidence in the truth and promises of God. This is the *third* qualification mentioned; and this was another cause of his success. He confided in God. He trusted to his promises. He depended, not on his own strength, but on the strength of the arm of God. With these qualifications he engaged in his work, and he was successful. These qualifications should be sought by the ministry of the gospel. Others should not indeed be neglected, but a man's ministry will usually be successful only as he seeks to possess those endowments which distinguished Barnabas—a kind, tender, benevolent heart; devoted piety; the fulness of the Spirit's influence; and strong, unwavering confidence in the promises and power of God. ¶ *And much people.* Many people. ¶ *Was added unto the Lord.* Became Christians.

25. *Then departed, &c.* Why Barnabas sought Saul is not known. It is probable, however, that it was owing to the remarkable success which he had in Antioch. There was a great revival of religion; and there was need of additional labour. In such scenes the ministers of the gospel need additional help

to Tarsus, for to seek Saul :

26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year

they assembled themselves ¹ with the church, and taught ^a much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

¹ or, *in*.

^a Matt. 28. 19.

as men in harvest-time seek the aid of others. Saul was in this vicinity (ch. ix. 30), and he was eminently fitted to aid in this work. With him Barnabas was well acquainted (Act. ix. 27), and probably there was no other one in that vicinity whom he could obtain. ¶ *To Tarsus.* Note, Acts ix. 11.

26. *That a whole year.* Antioch was a city exceedingly important in its numbers, wealth, and influence. It was for this reason, probably, that they spent so long a time there, instead of travelling in other places. The attention of the apostles was early and chiefly directed to *cities*, as being places of influence and centres of power. Thus Paul passed three years in the city of Ephesus. Acts xx. 31. And thus he continued a year and a half at Corinth. Acts xviii. 11. It may be added that the first churches were founded in cities; and the most remarkable success attended the preaching of the gospel in large towns. ¶ *They assembled themselves, &c.* They came together for worship. ¶ *With the church.* Marg. *in the church.* The Greek (*ἐν*) will bear this construction; but there is no instance in the New Testament where the word *church* refers to the *edifice* in which a congregation worships. It evidently here means that Barnabas and Saul convened *with* the Christian assembly at proper times, through the space of a year, for the purposes of public worship. ¶ *And the disciples were called Christians, &c.* As this became the distinguishing name of the followers of Christ, it was worthy of record. The name was evidently given because they were the followers of *Christ*. But by *whom*, or with what views, it was given, is not certainly known. Whether it was given by their enemies in *derision*, as the names *Puritan*, *Quaker*, *Methodist*, &c. have been; or whether the disciples assumed it themselves; or whether it was given by divine intimation, has been a matter of debate. That it was given in derision is not probable. For in the name *Christian* there was nothing dishonourable. To be the professed friends of *the Messiah*, or *the Christ*, was not with Jews a matter of reproach, for they *all* professed to be the friends of the Messiah. The cause of reproach with the disciples was that they

regarded *Jesus of Nazareth* as the *Messiah*; and hence, when they wished to speak of them with contempt, they would speak of them as *Galileans* (Acts ii. 7), or as *Nazarenes* (Acts xxiv. 5), "And a ring-leader of the sect of the *Nazarenes*." It is possible that the name might have been given to them as a mere *appellation*, without intending to convey by it any reproach. The *Gentiles* would probably use this name to distinguish them; and it might have become thus the common appellation. It is evident from the New Testament, I think, that it was not designed as a term of reproach. It is but twice used besides this place: Acts xxvi. 23, "Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a *Christian*." 1 Pet. iv. 16, "Yet if any man suffer as a *Christian*, let him not be ashamed." No certain argument can be drawn in regard to the source of the name from the word which is used here. The word *Χρηματίζω* used here, means, (1.) To transact any business; to be employed in accomplishing any thing, &c. This is its usual signification in the Greek writers. It means, (2.) To be divinely admonished, to be instructed by a divine communication, &c. Matt. ii. 12. Luke ii. 26. Acts x. 22. Heb. viii. 5; xi. 7; xii. 25. It also means, (3.) To be named, or called, in any way, without a divine communication. Rom. vii. 3, "She shall be *called* an adulteress." It cannot be denied, however, that the most usual signification in the New Testament is that of a *divine monition*, or *communication*; and it is certainly possible that the name was given by Barnabas and Saul. I incline to the opinion, however, that it was given to them by the Gentiles who were there, simply as an appellation, without intending it as a name of reproach, and that it was readily assumed by the disciples as a name that would fitly designate them. If it had been assumed by them, or if Barnabas and Saul had conferred the name, the record would probably have been to that effect; not simply that they "*were called*," but that they took this name, or that it was given by the apostles. It is, however, of little consequence whence the name originated. It soon became a name of reproach; and has usually been in all ages since, by the wicked, the gay, the licentious, and

27 And in these days came ^a prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.

a c.2.17; 13.1. Eph.4.11.

the ungodly. It is, however, an honoured name; the *most* honourable appellation that can be conferred on a mortal. It suggests at once to a Christian the name of his great Redeemer; the idea of our intimate relation to him; and the thought that we receive him as our chosen Leader, the source of our blessings, the author of our salvation, the fountain of our joys. It is the *distinguishing* name of all the redeemed. It is not that we belong to this or that denomination; it is not that our names are connected with high and illustrious ancestors; it is not that they are recorded in the books of heralds; it is not that they stand high in courts, and among the gay, and the fashionable, and the rich, that true honour is conferred on men. These are not the things that give *distinction* and *peculiarity* to the followers of the Redeemer. It is that they are *Christians*; that this is their peculiar name; that by this they are known; that this at once suggests their character, their feelings, their doctrines, their hopes, their joys. This binds them all together—a name which rises above every other appellation; which unites in one the inhabitants of distant nations and tribes of men; which connects the extremes of society, and places them in most important respects on a common level; and which is a bond to unite in one family all those who love the Lord Jesus, though dwelling in different climes, speaking different languages, engaged in different pursuits in life, and occupying distant graves at death. He who lives according to the import of this name is the most blessed and eminent of mortals. The name shall be had in remembrance when the names of royalty shall be remembered no more, and when the appellations of nobility shall cease to amuse or to dazzle the world.

27. *And in those days.* While Barnabas and Saul were at Antioch. ¶ *Came prophets.* The word prophet denotes properly one who foretells future events. See Note, Matt. vii. 15. It is sometimes used in the New Testament to denote simply *religious teachers, instructors sent from God*, without particular reference to future events. To teach the people in the doctrines of religion was a part of the prophetic office; and this idea only was sometimes denoted by the use of the word.

28 And there stood up one of them, named Agabus, ^b and signified by the Spirit that there should

b c.21.10.

See Rom. xii. 6. 1 Cor. xii. 10. 28; xiii. 2. 8; xiv. 3. 5. 24. These *prophets* seem to have been endowed in a remarkable manner with the knowledge of future events; with the power of explaining mysteries; and in some cases with the power of speaking foreign languages. In this case, it seems that one of them at least had the power of foretelling future events.

28. *Named Agabus.* This man is mentioned but in one other place in the New Testament. In Acts xxi. 10, 11, he is mentioned as having foretold that Paul would be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles. It is not expressly said that he was a Christian, but the connexion seems to imply that he was. ¶ *And signified.* See John xii. 33. The word usually denotes to *indicate by signs*, or with a degree of obscurity and uncertainty, not to declare in explicit language. But here it seems to denote simply to foretell, to predict. ¶ *By the Spirit.* Under the influence of the Spirit. He was inspired. ¶ *A great dearth.* A great famine. ¶ *Throughout all the world.* The word here used (*οἰκουμένην*), usually denotes the inhabitable world, the parts of the earth which are cultivated and occupied. It is sometimes limited, however, to denote an *entire land or country*, in contradistinction from the *parts* of it: thus, to denote the *whole* of the land of Palestine in distinction from its parts; or to denote that an event would have reference to *all* the land, and not be confined to one or more parts, as Galilee, Samaria, &c. See Note, Luke ii. 1. The meaning of this prophecy evidently is, that the famine would be extensive; that it would not be confined to a single province or region, but that it would extend so far as that it might be called *general*. In fact, though the famine was particularly severe in Judea, yet it extended much farther. This prediction was uttered not long after the conversion of Saul, and probably, therefore, about the year A. D. 38, or A. D. 40. Dr. Lardner has attempted to show that the prophecy had reference *only* to the land of Judea, though in fact there were famines in other places. (*Lardner's Works*, vol. i. pp. 253, 254. Ed. Lond. 1829.) ¶ *Which came to pass, &c.* This is one of the few instances in which the sacred writers in the New Testament affirm the fulfilment

be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cesar.

29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, de-

termined to send ^a relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea:

30 Which also they did, and ^b sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

^a Rom. 15. 26, 1 Cor. 16. 1. 2 Cor. 9. 1, 2.

^b c. 12. 25.

of a prophecy. The history having been written after the event, it was natural to give a passing notice of the fulfilment. ¶ *In the days of Claudius Cesar.* The Roman emperor. He began his reign A. D. 41, and reigned thirteen years. He was at last poisoned by one of his wives, Agrippina, who wished to raise her son Nero to the throne. During his reign no less than *four* different famines are mentioned by ancient writers, one of which was particularly severe in Judea, and was the one doubtless to which the sacred writer here refers. (1.) The first happened at Rome, and occurred in the first or second year of the reign of Claudius. It arose from the difficulties of importing provisions from abroad. It is mentioned by Dio, whose words are these: "There being a great famine, he (Claudius) not only took care for a present supply, but provided also for the time to come." He then proceeds to state the great expense which Claudius was at in making a good port at the mouth of the Tiber, and a convenient passage from thence up to the city. Dio, lib. lx. p. 671, 672. See also Suetonius, Claud. cap. 20. (2.) A second famine is mentioned as having been particularly severe in Greece. Of this famine Eusebius speaks in his *Chronicon*, p. 204. "There was a great famine in Greece, in which a modius of wheat (about half a bushel) was sold for six drachms." This famine is said by Eusebius to have occurred in the ninth year of the reign of Claudius. (3.) In the latter part of his reign, A. D. 51, there was another famine at Rome, mentioned by Suetonius (Claud. cap. 18), and by Tacitus (Ann. xii. 43). Of this Tacitus says, that it was so severe, that it was deemed to be a divine judgment. (4.) A *fourth* famine is mentioned as having occurred particularly in Judea. This is described by Josephus (Ant. b. xx. ch. 2, § 5). "A famine," says he, "did oppress them at the time (in the time of Claudius); and many people died for the want of what was necessary to procure food withal. Queen Helena sent some of her servants to Alexandria with money to buy a great quantity of corn, and others of them to Cyprus to bring a cargo of dried figs."

This famine is described as having continued under the two procurators of Judea, Tiberias Alexander and Cassius Fadus. Fadus was sent into Judea, on the death of Agrippa, about the fourth year of the reign of Claudius, and the famine, therefore, continued probably during the fifth, sixth, and seventh years of the reign of Claudius. See Note in Whiston's Josephus, Ant. b. xx. ch. 2, § 5; also Lardner as quoted above. Of this famine, or of the want consequent on the famine, repeated mention is made in the New Testament.

29. *Then the disciples.* The Christians at Antioch. ¶ *According to his ability.* According as they had prospered. It does not imply that they were rich, but that they rendered aid as they could afford it. ¶ *Determined to send relief.* This arose not merely from their general sense of their obligation to aid the poor, but they felt themselves particularly bound to aid their Jewish brethren. The obligation to aid the *temporal* wants of those from whom they had received so important spiritual mercies, is repeatedly enforced in the New Testament. Comp. Rom. xv. 25—27. 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. 2 Cor. ix. 1, 2. Gal. ii. 10.

30. *Sent it to the elders.* Greek, To the presbyters. This is the first mention which we have in the New Testament of *elders*, or *presbyters*, in the Christian church. The word literally denotes *aged men*, but it was a name of office only in the Jewish synagogue. It is clear, however, I think, that the elders of the Jewish synagogue here are not included, for the relief was intended for the "brethren," ver. 29, that is, the Christians who were at Jerusalem, and it is not probable that a charity like this would have been intrusted to the hands of Jewish elders. The connexion here does not enable us to determine any thing about the sense in which the word was used. I think it probable that it does not refer to *officers* in the church, but that it means simply that the charity was intrusted to the *aged*, prudent, and experienced men in the church, for distribution among the members. Calvin supposes that the apostles were particularly intended. But this is not probable. It

CHAPTER XII.

NOW about that time, Herod the king stretched ¹ forth his hands to vex certain of the church.

¹ or, began.

is possible that the *deacons*, who were probably aged men, may be here particularly referred to, but I am rather inclined to think that the charity was sent to the aged members of the church without respect to their office, to be distributed according to their discretion.

CHAPTER XIII.

1. *Now about that time.* That is, during the time that the famine existed; or the time when Barnabas and Saul went up to Jerusalem. This was probably about the fifth or sixth year of the reign of Claudius, not far from A. D. 47. ¶ *Herod the king.* This was Herod Agrippa. The Syriac so renders it expressly, and the chronology requires us so to understand it. He was a grandson of Herod the Great, and one of the sons of Aristobulus, whom Herod put to death. Josephus, *Antiquities*, b. xviii. 5. Herod the Great left three sons, between whom his kingdom was divided—Archelaus, Philip, and Antipas. Note, Matt. ii. 19. To Philip was left Iturea and Trachonitis. See Luke iii. 1. To Antipas, Galilee and Perea; and to Archelaus, Judea, Idumea, and Samaria. Archelaus, being accused of cruelty, was banished by Augustus to Vienna in Gaul, and Judea was reduced to a province, and united with Syria. When Philip died, this region was granted by the emperor Caligula to Herod Agrippa. Herod Antipas was driven as an exile also into Gaul, and then into Spain, and Herod Agrippa received also his tetrarchy. In the reign of Claudius also, the dominions of Herod Agrippa were still farther enlarged. When Caligula was slain, he was at Rome, and having ingratiated himself into the favour of Claudius, he conferred on him also Judea and Samaria, so that his dominions were equal in extent to those of his grandfather, Herod the Great. See Josephus, *Antiquities*, b. xix. ch. 5, § 1. ¶ *Stretched forth his hands.* A figurative expression, denoting that he laid his hands on them, or that he endeavoured violently to oppress the church. ¶ *To vex.* To injure, to do evil to. *xxxōσσι.* ¶ *Certain.* Some of the church. Who they were the writer immediately specifies.

2. *And he killed, &c.* He caused to be put to death with a sword, either by be-

heading, or piercing him through. The Roman procurators were intrusted with authority over life, though in the time of Pilate the Jews had not this authority.

3. *And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to*

^a Matt. 4.21; 20.23.

^b c.24.27.

heading, or piercing him through. The Roman procurators were intrusted with authority over life, though in the time of Pilate the Jews had not this authority. ¶ *James the brother of John.* This was the son of Zebedee. Matt. iv. 21. He is commonly called James the Greater, in contradistinction from James the son of Alphaeus, who is called James the Less. Matt. x. 3. In this manner were the predictions of our Saviour respecting him fulfilled. Matt. xx. 23, "Ye shall indeed drink of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with."

3. *And because he saw that it pleased the Jews.* This was the principle on which he acted. It was not from a sense of right; it was not to do justice, and protect the innocent; it was not to discharge the appropriate duties of a magistrate, and a king; but it was to promote his own popularity. It is probable that Agrippa would have acted in this way in any circumstances. He was ambitious, vain, and fawning; he sought, as his great principle, popularity. And he was willing to sacrifice, like many others, truth and justice to obtain this end. But there was also a particular reason for this in his case. He held his appointment under the Roman emperor. This foreign rule was always unpopular among the Jews. In order, therefore, to secure a peaceful reign, and to prevent insurrection, and tumult, it was necessary for him to court their favour; to indulge their wishes, and to fall in with their prejudices. Alas! how many monarchs and rulers there have been, who were governed by no better principle, and whose sole aim has been to secure popularity, even at the expense of law, and truth, and justice. That this was the character of Herod, is attested by Josephus, *Ant.* xix. ch. 8, § 3. "This king (Herod Agrippa) was by nature very beneficent, and liberal in his gifts, and very ambitious to please the people with such large donations; and he made himself very illustrious by the many expensive presents he made them. He took delight in giving, and rejoiced in living with good reputation." ¶ *To take Peter also.* Peter was one of the most conspi-

take Peter ^a also. Then were the days ^b of unleavened bread.

4 And when he had apprehended him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four quaternions of soldiers, to keep him; intending

^a Jno. 21. 13.

^b Ex. 12. 14, 15.

cuous men in the church. He had made himself particularly obnoxious by his severe and pungent discourses, and by his success in winning men to Christ. It was natural therefore that he should be the next object of attack. ¶ *The days of unleavened bread.* The Passover, or the seven days immediately succeeding the Passover, during which they were required to eat bread without leaven. Ex. xii. 15—18. It was sometime during this period that Herod chose to apprehend Peter. Why this season was selected is not known. As it was, however, a season of religious solemnity, and as Herod was desirous of showing his attachment to the religious rites of the nation (Jos. Antiq. xix. 7. 3), it is probable that he chose *this* period to show to them more impressively his purpose to oppose all false religions, and to maintain the existing establishments of the nation.

4. And when he had apprehended him. When he had taken or arrested him. ¶ *He put him in prison.* During the solemnities of this religious festival, it would have been deemed improper to have engaged in the trial of a supposed criminal. The minds of the people were expected to be devoted solely to the solemnities of religion; and hence Herod chose to retain him in custody until the Passover had ended. ¶ *To four quaternions of soldiers.* A *quaternion* was a company of four; consequently the whole number employed here was sixteen. The Romans divided the night into four watches, so that the guards could be relieved; those who were on guard occupying three hours, and being then relieved. Of the *four* who were on guard, *two* were with Peter in the prison (ver. 6), and two kept watch before the door of the prison. The utmost precaution was thus taken that he should not escape; and Herod thus gave the most ample security to the Jews of his intention to secure Peter, and to bring him to trial. ¶ *Intending after Easter.* There never was a more absurd or unhappy translation than this. The original is simply *after the Passover* (μετα το πάσχα). The word *Easter* now denotes the festival observed by many Christian churches

after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

5 Peter therefore was kept in prison; but ¹ prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

¹ or, instant and earnest prayer was made. 2Cor. 1.

11. Eph. 6. 18, 19. 1Thess. 5. 17. Jas. 5. 16.

in honour of the resurrection of the Saviour. But the original has no reference to that; nor is there the slightest evidence that any such festival was observed at the time when this book was written. The translation is not only unhappy, as it does not convey at all the meaning of the original, but because it may contribute to foster an opinion that such a festival was observed in the times of the apostles. The word *Easter* is of Saxon origin, and is supposed to be derived from *Eostre*, the goddess of love, or the Venus of the North, in honour of whom a festival was celebrated by our pagan ancestors in the month of April. (Webster.) As this festival coincided with the Passover of the Jews, and with the feast observed by Christians in honour of the resurrection of Christ, the name came to be used to denote the latter. In the old Anglo-Saxon service-books the term *Easter* is used frequently to translate the word Passover. In the translation by Wiclif, the word *paske*, i. e. passover, is used. But Tindal and Coverdale used the word *Easter*, and hence it has very improperly crept into our translation. (Clark.) ¶ *To bring him forth to the people.* That is, evidently, to put him publicly to death to gratify them. The providence of God in regard to Peter is thus remarkable. Instead of his being put suddenly to death, as was James, he was reserved for *future* trial; and thus an abundant opportunity was given for the prayers of the church, and for his consequent release.

5. But prayer was made. The church was apprized of his imprisonment and danger; and had no resource but to apply to God by prayer. In scenes of danger there is no other refuge; and the result shows that even in most discouraging circumstances, God can hear prayer. Nothing scarcely could appear more hopeless than the idea of rescuing Peter out of the hands of Herod, and out of the prison, and out of the custody of sixteen men, by prayer. But the prayer of faith was prevalent with God. ¶ *Without ceasing.* Intense, steady, ardent prayer. The word here used (ἐκτενής) is found in but one other place in the New Testament;

6 And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains; and the keepers before the door kept the prison.

7 And, behold, the ^a angel of the Lord came upon *him*, and a light shined in the prison: and he

a Ps. 37. 32, 33. c. 5. 19.

1 Pet. iv. 8, "Have *fervent* charity among yourselves." The word has rather the idea that their prayer was *earnest* and *fervent* , than that it was constant. ¶ *Of the church.* By the church.

6. *And when Herod would have brought him forth.* When he was about to bring him to be put to death. ¶ *The same night.* That is, the night *preceding* . The intention of Herod was to bring him out as soon as the Passover was over; but during the night which immediately *preceded* the day in which Herod intended to bring him to punishment, Peter was rescued. ¶ *Peter was sleeping.* Here is an instance of remarkable composure, and one of the effects of peace of conscience and of confidence in God. It was doubtless known to Peter what the intention of Herod was. James had just been put to death; and Peter had no reason to expect a better fate. And yet in this state, he slept as quietly as if there had been no danger, and was roused even by an *angel* to contemplate his condition, and to make his escape.—There is nothing that will give quiet rest and gentle sleep so certainly as a conscience void of offence; and in the midst of imminent dangers, he who confides in God may rest securely and calmly. ¶ *Between two soldiers.* Note, ver. 4. Peter was bound to the two. His left hand was chained to the right hand of one of the soldiers, and his right hand to the left hand of the other. This was a common mode of securing prisoners among the Romans. See abundant authorities for this quoted in Lardner's *Credibility* , part i. ch. x. § 9. Lond. ed. 1829. vol. i. pp. 242, 243, &c. ¶ *And the keeper, &c.* See ver. 4. Two soldiers were stationed at the door. We may see now that every possible precaution was used to ensure the safe custody of Peter. (1.) He was in prison. (2.) He was in the charge of sixteen men, who could relieve each other when weary, and thus every security was given that he could not escape by inattention or weariness on their part. (3.) He was bound fast between two men. And (4.)

smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And ^b his chains fell off from *his* hands.

8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals: and so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

b c. 16. 26.

He was further guarded by two others, whose business it was to watch the door of the prison. It is to be remembered, also, that it was death for a Roman soldier to be found sleeping at his post. And in this way every possible security was given for the safe keeping of Peter. But God can deliver in spite of all the precautions of men; and it is easy for him to overcome the most cunning devices of his enemies.

7. *And behold the angel of the Lord.* See Note, ch. v. 19. ¶ *Came upon him.* Greek, Was present with him; stood near him (ἵσταντο). ¶ *And a light shined in the prison.* Many have supposed that this was lightening. But *light* , and *splendour* , and shining apparel are commonly represented as the accompaniments of the heavenly beings when they visit the earth. Luke ii. 9; xxiv. 4. Comp. Mark ix. 3. It is highly probable that this light was discerned only by Peter; and it would be to him an undoubted proof of the divine interposition in his behalf. ¶ *And he smote Peter on the side.* This was doubtless a gentle blow or stroke to arouse him from sleep. ¶ *And his chains, &c.* This could have been only by divine power. No natural means were used, or could have been used without arousing the guard. It is a sublime expression of the ease with which God can deliver from danger, and rescue his friends. Comp. ch. xvi. 26.

8. *Gird thyself.* When they slept, the outer garment was thrown off, and the *girdle* with which they bound their inner garment, or tunic, was loosed. He was directed now to gird up that inner garment as they usually wore it; that is, to *dress himself* , and prepare to follow him. ¶ *Bind on thy sandals.* Put on thy sandals—prepared to walk. Note, Matt. iii. 11. ¶ *Cast thy garment about thee.* The outer garment, that was thrown loosely around the shoulders. It was nearly square, and was laid aside when they slept, or worked, or ran. The direction was that he should dress himself in his

9 And he went out, and followed him; and wist not ^a that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.^b

10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city, which opened to them of his own accord; and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.

a Ps. 126. 1.

b c. 10. 3, 17.

usual apparel. See Note, Matt. v. 38—42.

9. *And wist not.* Knew not. ¶ *That it was true.* That it was real. ¶ *Saw a vision.* That is, was a representation made to his mind, similar to that which he had seen before. Comp. ch. x. 11, 12. It was so astonishing, so unexpected, so wonderful, that he could not realize that it was true.

10. *The first and second ward.* The word which is here rendered *ward* (φυλακήν), properly denotes the act of guarding; but it is most commonly used to denote a prison, or place of confinement. In this place it seems to denote the *guard* itself—the soldiers stationed at intervals in the entrance into the prison. These were passed silently, probably a deep sleep having been sent on them to facilitate the escape of Peter. ¶ *The iron gate.* The outer gate, secured with iron, as the doors of prisons are now. ¶ *That leadeth unto the city.* Or rather into (εἰς) the city. Jerusalem was surrounded by three walls. (See Lightfoot on this place.) The prison is supposed to have been situated between two of these walls. And it is probable that the entrance to the prison was immediately from the inner wall, so that this gate opened directly into the city. ¶ *Of his own accord.* Itself. It opened spontaneously, without the application of any force, or key, thus showing conclusively that Peter was delivered by miraculous interposition. ¶ *And passed on through one street.* Till Peter was entirely safe from any danger of pursuit, and then the angel left him. God had effected his complete rescue, and now left him to his own efforts as usual.

11. *And when Peter was come to himself.* This expression naturally means when he had overcome his amazement, and astonishment at the unexpected de-

11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent ^c his angel, and hath ^d delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

12 And when he had considered *the thing*, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many ^e were gathered together, praying.

c 2Ch. 16. 9. Ps. 34. 7. Da. 3. 28; 6. 22. Heb. 1. 14. d Ps. 33. 18, 19; 97. 10. 2Cor. 1. 10. 2Pet. 2. 9. e ver. 5.

liverance, so as to be capable of reflection. He had been amazed by the whole transaction. He thought it was a vision; and in the suddenness and rapidity with which it was done, he had no time for cool reflection. The events of divine providence often overwhelm and amaze us; and such are their suddenness, and rapidity, and unexpected character in their development, as to confound us, and prevent calm and collected reflection. ¶ *Of a surety.* Certainly, surely. He considered all the circumstances, he saw that he was actually at liberty, and that it could have been effected only by divine interposition. ¶ *The expectation of the people.* From this it appears that the people earnestly desired his death; and it was to gratify that desire that Herod had imprisoned him.

12. *And when he had considered, &c.* Thinking on the subject; considering what he should do in these circumstances. ¶ *He came to the house of Mary, &c.* Probably this house was near him; and he would naturally seek the dwelling of a Christian friend. ¶ *The mother of John, &c.* Probably this was the John Mark who wrote the gospel. But this is not certain. ¶ *Whose surname.* Greek, Who was called Mark. It does not mean that he had two names conferred, as with us, both of which were used at the same time. But he was called by either, the Greeks probably using the name *Mark*, and the Jews the name *John*. He is frequently mentioned afterwards, as having been the attendant of Paul and Barnabas in their travels. ver. 25; xv. 39. 2 Tim. iv. 11. He was a nephew of Barnabas. Col. iv. 10. ¶ *Where many were gathered together, praying.* This was in the night, and it shows the propriety of observing extraordinary seasons of prayer, even in the night. Peter was to have been put to death the next

13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came¹ to hearken, named Rhoda.

14 And when she knew Peter's

¹ or, to ask who was there.

day; and they assembled to pray for his release, and did not intermit their prayers. When dangers increase around us and our friends, we should become more fervent in prayer. While life remains we may pray; and even when there is no human hope, and we may have no power to heal or deliver, still God may interpose, as he did here, in answer to prayer.

13. *At the door of the gate.* Rather the door of the *vestibule*, or principal entrance into the house. The house was entered through such a *porch* or *vestibule*, and it was the *door* opening into this which is here intended. See Note, Matt. ix. 2. ¶ *A damsel.* A girl. ¶ *Came to hearken.* To hear who was there. ¶ *Named Rhoda.* This is a Greek name signifying a *rose*. It was not unusual for the Hebrews to give the names of flowers, &c. to their daughters. Thus *Susanna*, a lily; *Hadesssa*, a myrtle; *Tamar*, a palm-tree, &c. (*Grotius*.)

14. *She opened not the gate.* At this time of night, and in these circumstances, the door would be fastened. Christians were doubtless alarmed by the death of James, and the imprisonment of Peter, and they would take all possible precautions for their own safety. ¶ *For gladness.* In her joy she hastened to inform those who were assembled of the safety of Peter.

15. *Thou art mad.* Thou art insane. They seemed to have regarded his rescue as so difficult and so hopeless, that they deemed it proof of derangement that she now affirmed it. And yet this was the very thing for which they had been so earnestly praying. When it was now announced to them that the object of their prayers was granted, they deemed the messenger that announced it insane. Christians are often surprised even when their prayers are answered. They are overwhelmed and amazed at the success of their own petitions, and are slow to believe that the very thing for which they have sought could be granted. It shows perhaps with how *little faith*, after all, they pray; and how slow they are to believe that God can hear and answer prayer. In a revival of religion, in answer to prayer, Christians are often overwhelmed, and asto-

nished when even their own petitions are granted, and when God manifests his own power in his own way and time. Prayer should be persevered in, and we should place ourselves in a waiting posture to catch the first indications that God has heard us with joy. ¶ *But she constantly affirmed it.* She insisted on it. How much better it would have been to have hastened at once to the gate, than thus to have engaged in a controversy on the subject. Peter was suffered to remain knocking, while they debated the matter. Christians are often engaged in some unprofitable controversy, when they should hasten to catch the first tokens of divine favour, and open their arms to welcome the proofs that God has heard their prayers. ¶ *Then said they.* Still resolved not to be convinced. ¶ *It is his angel.* Any way of accounting for it rather than to admit the simple fact, or to ascertain the simple truth. All this was produced by the *little hope* which they had of his release, and their earnest desire that it should be so. It was just such a state of mind as is indicated when we say 'the news is too good to be believed.' The expression *it is his angel* may mean, that they supposed the *tutelar guardian*, or angel appointed to attend Peter, had come to announce something respecting him, and that he had assumed the voice and form of Peter, in order to render them certain that he came from him. This notion arose from the common belief of the Jews, that each individual had assigned to him, at birth, a celestial spirit, whose office it was to guard and defend him through life. Note, Matt. xviii. 10. That the Jews entertained this opinion is clear from their writings. (See *Kuinöel*.) Lightfoot thinks that they who were assembled supposed that this angel had assumed the voice and manner of Peter, in order to intimate to them that he was about to die, and to excite them to earnest prayer that he might die with constancy and firmness. Whatever their opinions were, however, it *proves* nothing on these points. There is no evidence that they were inspired in these opinions; nor are their notions countenanced by the Scriptures. They were the mere common traditions of the Jews, and prove nothing in regard

15 And they said unto her,

'Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his ^a angel.

16 But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished.

17 But he beckoning^b unto them with the hand, to hold their peace, declared^c unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison.

^a Matt. 13. 10.

^b c. 13. 16.

^c Ps. 66. 16

to the truth of the opinion one way or the other.

16. *Were astonished.* They were now convinced that it was Peter, and they were amazed that he had been rescued. As yet they were of course ignorant of the manner in which it was done.

17. *But he beckoning, &c.* To prevent the noise, and tumult, and transport which was likely to be produced. His wish was, not that there should be clamorous joy, but that they should listen in silence to what God had done. It was sufficient to awe the soul, and produce deep, grateful feeling. A noise might excite the neighbouring Jews, and produce danger. But religion is calm and peaceful; and its great scenes and surprising deliverances are rather fitted to awe the soul, to produce calm, sober, and grateful contemplation, than the noise of rejoicing, and the shoutings of exultation. The consciousness of the presence of God, and of his mighty power, does not produce rapturous disorder and tumult, but holy, solemn, calm, grateful emotion. ¶ *Go, shew these things, &c.* Acquaint them that their prayer is heard, and that they may rejoice also at the mercy of God. ¶ *Unto James.* James the son of Alphaeus, commonly called the Less. Note, ver. 2. Acts i. 13. Matt. x. 2. ¶ *And to the brethren.* Particularly to the other apostles. ¶ *And went into another place.* Probably a place of greater safety. Where he went is not known. The papists pretend that he went to Rome. But of this there is no evidence. He is mentioned as in Jerusalem again in ch. xv. The meaning is evidently that he went into some place of retirement till the danger was passed.

18. *No small stir.* Amazement that he had escaped, and apprehension of the consequences. The punishment which they had reason to expect, for having suffered his escape, was death.

And he said, Go, shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

18 Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter.

19 And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and command-

19. *He examined the keepers.* The soldiers who were intrusted with his custody. Probably only those who had the special care of him at that watch of the night. The word *examine* here means to inquire diligently, to make investigation. He subjected them to a rigid scrutiny to ascertain the manner of his escape; for it is evident that Herod did not mean to admit the possibility of a miraculous interposition. ¶ *Should be put to death.* For having failed to keep Peter. This punishment they had a right to expect for having suffered his escape. ¶ *And he went down, &c.* How soon after the escape of Peter he went down to Cæsarea, or how long he abode there, is not known. Cæsarea was rising into magnificence, and the Roman governors made it often their abode. Note, Acts viii. 49. Comp. Acts xxv. 1. 4. This journey of Herod is related by Josephus, Antiq. b. xix. ch. viii. § 2. He says that it was after he had reigned over all Judea three years. ¶ *And there abode.* That is, till his death, which occurred shortly after. We do not learn that he made any further inquiry after Peter, or that he attempted any further persecutions of the Christians. The guard was undoubtedly put to death; and thus Herod used all his power to create the impression that Peter had escaped by their negligence; and this would undoubtedly be believed by the Jews. See Matt. xxviii. 15. He might *himself* perhaps be convinced, however, that the escape was by miracle, and be afraid to attempt any further persecutions; or the affairs of his government might have called off his attention to other things; and thus, as in the case of the "persecution that arose about Stephen," the political changes and dangers might divert the attention from putting Christians to death. Note, ch. ix. 31. Thus by the providence of God *this* persecution, that had been commenced, not by popular tumult, but by royal authority

ed that *they* should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Cesarea, and *there* abode.

20 And Herod ¹ was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus ² the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because

¹ or, bare an hostile mind, intending war.

² That was over the king's bed-chamber.

and power, and that was aimed at the very pillars of the church, ceased. The prayers of the church prevailed; and the monarch was overcome, disappointed, humbled, and by divine judgment soon put to death.

20 And Herod was highly displeased, &c. Greek, *Bare an hostile mind, intending war*. See the margin. The Greek word (*θυμολαχῶν*) does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It means to meditate war; to purpose war in the mind; or here probably, to be *enraged* or *angry* at them. What was the cause of this hostility to the people of Tyre and Sidon is not mentioned, and conjecture is useless. It is not at all inconsistent, however, with the well known character of Herod. It was probably from some cause relating to commerce. Tyre and Sidon were under the Roman power, and had some shadow of liberty (*Grotius*); and it is probable that they might have embarrassed Herod in some of his regulations respecting commerce. ¶ *Tyre and Sidon*. Note, Matt. xi. 21. They were north of Cæsarea. ¶ *They came with one accord*. Fearing the effects of his anger, they united in sending an embassy to him to make peace. ¶ *Blastus the king's chamberlain*. See Rom. xvi. 23. The word *chamberlain* denotes an officer who is charged with the direction and management of a chamber, or chambers, particularly a bed-chamber. It denotes here a man who had charge of the bed-chamber of Herod. ¶ *Because their country was nourished*, &c. Was supplied by the territories of Herod. The country of Tyre and Sidon included a narrow strip of land on the coast of the Mediterranean. Of course they were dependent for provisions, and for articles of commerce, on the interior country; but this belonged to the kingdom of Herod; and as they were entirely dependent on his country, as he had power to dry up the sources of their support and commerce, they were the more urgent to secure his favour.

their ^a country was nourished by the king's country.

21 And upon a set day, Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.

22 And the people gave a shout, saying, *It is* ^b the voice of a god, and not of a man.

^a Ezek. 27. 17.

^b Jude 16.

21. And upon a set day. An appointed, public day. This was the second day of the sports and games which Herod celebrated in Cæsarea in honour of Claudius Cæsar. Josephus has given an account of this occurrence, which coincides remarkably with the narrative here. The account is contained in his *Antiquities* of the Jews, b. xix. ch. viii. § 2, and is as follows: "Now when Agrippa had reigned three years over all Judea, he came to the city Cæsarea, which was formerly called Strato's Tower; and there he exhibited shows in honour of Cæsar, upon his being informed that there was a certain festival celebrated to make vows for his safety. At which festival a great multitude was gotten together of the principal persons, and such as were of dignity throughout his province. On the second day of which shows, he put on a garment made wholly of silver," &c. ¶ *Arrayed in royal apparel*. In the apparel of a king. Josephus thus describes the dress which Herod wore on that occasion. "He put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of wonderful texture, and early in the morning came into the theatre [place of the shows and games], at which time the silver of his garment, being illuminated by the first reflection of the sun's rays upon it, shone after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently on him." ¶ *Sat upon his throne*. This does not denote a throne in the usual sense of that word, but a high seat in the theatre, where he sat, and from whence he could have a full view of the games and sports. From this place he made his speech. ¶ *Made an oration*. Addressed the people. What was the subject of this speech is not intimated by Luke or Josephus.

22. And the people gave a shout. A loud applause. ¶ *It is the voice of a god*, &c. It is not probable that the Jews joined in this acclamation, but that it was made by the idolatrous Gentiles. Josephus gives

23 And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory; and he was eaten

of worms, and gave up the ghost.

24 But the word of God grew ^a and multiplied.

^a Col. 1. 6.

a similar account of their feelings and conduct. He says, "And presently his flatterers cried out, one from one place, and another from another (though not for his good), that he was a god; and they added, 'Be thou merciful unto us, for although we have hitherto revered thee only as a king, yet shall we henceforth own thee as a superior to mortal nature.'" It is true that Josephus says that this was done when they saw his splendid apparel, and that he gives no account of his addressing the people; while Luke describes it as the effect of his speech. But the discrepancy is of no consequence. Luke is as credible an historian as Josephus; and his account is more consistent than that of the Jewish historian. It is far more probable that this applause and adoration would be excited by a speech, than simply by beholding his apparel.

23. And immediately the angel of the Lord. Diseases and death are in the Scriptures often attributed to an angel. See 2 Sam. xxiv. 16. 1 Chron. xxi. 12. 15. 20. 27. 2 Chron. xxxii. 21. It is not intended that there was a *miracle* in this case, but it certainly *is* intended by the sacred writer, that his death was a divine judgment on him for his receiving homage as a god. Josephus says of him that he "did neither rebuke them [the people], nor reject their impious flattery. A severe pain arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner. And when he was quite worn out by the pain in his belly for five days, he departed this life, in the fifty-fourth year of his age, and the seventh of his reign." Josephus does not mention that it was done by an *angel*, but says that when he looked up, he saw an owl sitting on a rope over his head, and judging it to be an evil omen, he immediately became melancholy, and was seized with the pain. ¶ *Because he gave not God the glory.* Because he was willing himself to receive the worship due to God. It was the more sinful in him as he was a Jew, and was acquainted with the true God, and with the evils of idolatry. He was proud, and willing to be flattered, and even adored. He had *sought* their applause; he had arrayed himself in this splendid manner to excite their admiration; and when they carried it even so far as to offer *divine homage*, he did not reject the impious flattery, but

listened still to their praises. Hence he was judged; and God vindicated his own insulted honour by inflicting severe pains on him, and by his most awful death. ¶ *And he was eaten of worms.* The word used here is not elsewhere found in the New Testament. A similar disease is recorded of Antiochus Epiphanes, in the Apocrypha. 2 Mac. ix. 5, "But the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel smote him with an invisible and incurable plague, for a pain in the bowels that was remediless, came upon him, and sore torments of the inner parts (ver. 9), so that worms rose up out of the body of this wicked man," &c. Probably this was the disease known as *morbus pedicularis*. It is loathsome, offensive, and most painful. See the death of Antiochus Epiphanes, described in 2 Mac. ix. With this disease also Herod the Great, grandfather of Herod Agrippa, died. Josephus, Antiquities, b. xvii. ch. 6, § 5. Such a death, so painful, sudden, and loathsome was an appropriate judgment on the pride of Herod. We may here learn, (1.) That sudden and violent deaths are often an act of direct divine judgment on wicked men. (2.) That men, when they seek praise and flattery, expose themselves to the displeasure of God. His glory he will not give to another. (3.) That the most proud, and mighty, and magnificent princes have no security of their lives. God can in a moment—even when they are surrounded by their worshippers and flatterers—touch the seat of life, and turn them to loathsomeness and putrefaction. What a pitiable being is a man of pride receiving from his fellow-men that homage which is due to God alone! See Isa. xiv. (4.) Pride and vanity, in any station of life, are hateful in the sight of God. Nothing is more inappropriate to our situation as lost, dying sinners, and nothing will more certainly meet the wrath of heaven. (5.) We have here a strong confirmation of the truth of the sacred narrative. In all essential particulars, Luke coincides in his account of the death of Herod with Josephus. This is one of the many circumstances which go to show that the sacred Scriptures were written at the time when they professed to be; and that they accord with the truth. See Lardner's Credibility part i. ch. 1, § 6.

25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled *their*¹ ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

¹ or, charge. c. 11. 29, 30.

24. *But the word of God grew, &c.* Great success attended it. The persecutions had now ceased; and notwithstanding all the attempts which had been made to crush it, still the church increased and flourished. The liberation of Peter and the death of Herod would contribute to extend it. It was a new evidence of divine interposition in behalf of the church; it would augment the zeal of Christians; it would humble their enemies; and fill those with fear who had attempted to oppose and crush the church of God.

25. *Returned from Jerusalem.* They had gone to Jerusalem to carry alms, and they now returned to Antioch. ch. xi. 30. ¶ *When they had fulfilled their ministry.* When they had accomplished the purpose for which they had been sent there; that is, to deposite the alms of the church at Antioch, in the hands of the elders of the churches. ch. xi. 30. ¶ *John, whose surname was Mark.* Note, ver. 12. From this period the sacred historian records chiefly the labours of Paul. The labours of the other apostles are, after this, seldom referred to in this book; and the attention is fixed almost entirely on the trials and travels of the great apostle of the Gentiles. His important labours, his unwearied efforts, his eminent success, and the fact that *Luke* was his companion, may be the reasons why his labours are made so prominent in the history. Through the previous chapters we have seen the church rise from small beginnings, until it was even now spreading into surrounding regions. We have seen it survive two persecutions, commenced and conducted with all the power and malice of Jewish rulers. We have seen the most zealous of the persecutors converted to the faith which he once destroyed; and the royal persecutor put to death by the divine judgment. And we have thus seen that God was the protector of the church; that no weapon formed against it could prosper; and that, according to the promise of the Redeemer, the gates of hell could not prevail against it. In that God and Saviour, who *then* defended the church, we may still confide, and may be assured that He who was

CHAPTER XIII.

NOW there were in the church that was at Antioch, certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called

then its friend has it still "engraved on the palms of his hands," and intends that it shall extend until it fills the earth with light and salvation.

CHAPTER XIII.

1. *The church that was at Antioch.* Note, ch. xi. 20. ¶ *Certain prophets.* Note, ch. xi. 27. ¶ *And teachers.* Teachers are several times mentioned in the New Testament as an order of ministers, 1 Cor. xii. 28, 29. Eph. iv. 11. 2 Pet. ii. 1. Their precise rank and duty are not known. It is probable that those here mentioned as prophets were the same persons as the teachers. They might discharge *both* offices, predicting future events, and instructing the people. ¶ *As Barnabas.* Barnabas was a preacher (ch. iv. 35, 36; ix. 27; xi. 22. 26); and it is not improbable that the names "prophets and teachers" here simply designate the preachers of the gospel. ¶ *Simeon that was called Niger.* *Niger* is a Latin name meaning black. Why the name was given is not known. Nothing more is known of him than is here mentioned. ¶ *Lucius of Cyrene.* Cyrene was in Africa. Note, Matt. xxvii. 32. He is afterwards mentioned as with the apostle Paul when he wrote the epistle to the Romans. Rom. xvi. 21. ¶ *And Manaen.* He is not elsewhere mentioned in the New Testament. ¶ *Which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch.* Herod Antipas, not Herod Agrippa. Herod was tetrarch of Galilee. Luke iii. 1. The word here translated "which had been brought up," *συντεταγμένος*, denotes one who is educated or nourished at the same time with another. It is not elsewhere used in the New Testament. He might have been connected with the royal family, and being nearly of the same age, was educated by the father of Herod Antipas with him. He was therefore a man of rank and education, and his conversion shows that the gospel was not confined entirely in its influence to the poor. ¶ *And Saul.* Saul was an apostle; and yet he is here mentioned among the "prophets and teachers." Showing that these words denote ministers of the gospel in general, without reference to any particular order or rank.

Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen,¹ which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost

¹ or, Herod's foster-brother.

2. As they ministered to the Lord. It is probable that this took place on some day set apart for fasting and prayer. The expression "ministered to the Lord," denotes as they were engaged in prayer to the Lord, or as they were engaged in divine service. The Syriac thus renders the passage. ¶ *The Holy Ghost said.* Evidently by direct revelation. ¶ *Separate me.* Set apart to me, or for my service. It does not mean to ordain, but simply to designate, or appoint to this specific work. ¶ *For the work whereunto I have called them.* Not the apostolic office, for Saul was called to that by the express revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. i. 12), and Barnabas was not an apostle. The "work" to which they were now set apart was that of preaching the gospel in the regions round about Antioch. It was not any permanent office in the church, but was a temporary designation to a missionary enterprise in extending the gospel especially through Asia Minor and the adjacent regions. Accordingly, when, in the fulfilment of this appointment, they had travelled through Seleucia, Cyprus, Paphos, Pamphylia, Pisidia, &c. they returned to Antioch, having fulfilled the work to which they were separated. See Acts xiv. 25, 27. ¶ *Whereunto I have called them.* This proves that they received their commission to this work directly from God the Holy Spirit. It is possible that Paul and Barnabas had been influenced by the Spirit to engage in this work, but they were to be sent forth by the concurrence and designation of the church.

3. And when they had fasted. They were fasting when they were commanded to set them apart. Yet this probably refers to an appointed day of prayer, with reference to this very purpose. The first formal mission to the Gentiles was an important event in the church; and they engaged in this appointment with deep solemnity, and with humbling themselves before God. ¶ *And prayed.* This enterprise was a new one. The gospel had been preached to the Jews, to Cornelius, and to the Gentiles at Antioch. But there had been no solemn, and pub-

said, Separate ^a me Barnabas and Saul for the work ^b whereunto I have called them.

3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away.

^a Gal. i. 15.

^b 1 Tim. 2. 7.

lic, and concerted plan of sending it to the Gentiles, or of appointing a mission to the heathen. It was a new event, and was full of danger and hardships. The primitive church felt the need of divine direction and aid in the great work. Two missionaries were to be sent forth among strangers, to be exposed to perils by sea and land; and the commencement of the enterprise demanded prayer. The church humbled itself, and this primitive missionary society sought, as all others should do, the divine blessing, to attend the labours of those employed in this work. The result showed that the prayer was heard. ¶ *And laid their hands on them.* That is, those who are mentioned in ver. 1. This was not to set them apart to the apostolic office. Saul was chosen by Christ himself, and there is no evidence that any of the apostles were ordained by the imposition of hands. Note, Acts i. 25. Matt. x. 1—5. Luke vi. 12—16. And Barnabas was not an apostle in the original and peculiar sense of the word. Nor is it meant that this was an ordination to the ministry, to the office of preaching the gospel. For both had been engaged in this before. Saul received his commission directly from the Saviour, and began at once to preach. Acts ix. 20. Gal. i. 11—17. Barnabas had preached at Antioch, and was evidently recognised as a preacher by the apostles. Acts ix. 27; xi. 22, 23. It follows, therefore, that this was not an ordination in the doctrinal sense of this term, either Episcopal, or Presbyterian, but was a designation to a particular work—a work of vast importance; strictly a missionary appointment by the church, under the authority of the Holy Ghost. The act of laying hands on any person was practised, not only in ordination, but in conferring a favour; and in setting apart for any purpose. See Lev. iii. 2. 8. 13; iv. 4. 29; xvi. 21. Num. viii. 12. Mark v. 23; xvi. 18. Matt. xxi. 46. It means in this case that they appointed them to a particular field of labour, and by laying hands on them they implored the blessing of God to attend them. ¶ *They sent them away.* The church by

4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.

6 And when they had gone

its teachers sent them forth under the direction of the Holy Ghost. All missionaries are thus sent by the church; and the church should not forget its ambassadors in their great and perilous work.

4. *Being sent forth by the Holy Ghost.* Having been called to this work by the Holy Spirit, and being under his direction. ¶ *Departed unto Seleucia.* This city was situated at the mouth of the river Orontes, where it falls into the Mediterranean. Antioch was also built on this river, some distance from its mouth. ¶ *They sailed to Cyprus.* An island in the Mediterranean, not far from Seleucia. Note, ch. iv. 36.

5. *And when they were at Salamis.* This was the principal city and seaport of Cyprus. It was situated on the southeast part of the island, and was afterwards called Constantia. ¶ *In the synagogues of the Jews.* Jews were living in all the countries adjacent to Judea; and in those countries they had synagogues. The apostles uniformly preached first to them. ¶ *And they had also John to their minister.* John Mark. ch. xii. 12. He was their attendant; he was with them as a companion, yet not pretending to be equal to them in office. They had been specifically designated to this work. He was with them as their friend and travelling companion; perhaps also employed in making the needful arrangements for their comfort, and for the supply of their wants in their travels.

6. *And when they had gone through the isle.* The length of the island, according to Strabo, was one thousand and four hundred stadia, or nearly one hundred and seventy miles. ¶ *Unto Paphos.* Paphos was a city at the western extremity of the island. It was the residence of the proconsul, and was distinguished for a splendid temple erected to *Venus*, who was worshipped throughout the island. Cyprus was fabled to be the place of the birth of this goddess. It had, besides Paphos and Salamis, several towns of note—Citium, the birth-place of Zeno; Amathus,

through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus:

7 Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.

sacred to Venns, &c. Its present capital is Nicosia. Whether Paul preached at any of these places is not recorded. The island is supposed formerly to have had a million of inhabitants. ¶ *A certain sorcerer.* Greek, Magus, or magician. See Note, ch. viii. 9. ¶ *A false prophet.* Pretending to be endowed with the gift of prophecy; or a man, probably, who pretended to be inspired. ¶ *Bar-jesus.* The word *Bar* is Syriac, and means *son*. Jesus, or Joshua, was not an uncommon name among the Jews. The name was given from his father—son of Jesus, or Joshua; as Bar-jonas, son of Jonas.

7. *Which was with the deputy.* Or with the proconsul. Cyprus was at this time subject to the Roman empire, and was governed by a proconsul appointed by the emperor. The provinces subject to Rome were governed by persons who held their office originally from the *consul*, or chief magistrate of the Roman republic. Men of the rank of senators were usually appointed to these offices. See on this subject Lardner's *Credibility*, part i. ch. i. § 11, where he has fully vindicated the accuracy of the appellation which is here given to Sergius by Luke. ¶ *Sergius Paulus, a prudent man.* The word here rendered *prudent* means *intelligent, wise, learned*. It also may have the sense of *candid*, and may have been given to this man because he was of large and liberal views, of a philosophic and inquiring turn of mind, and was willing to obtain knowledge from any source. Hence he had entertained the Jews; and hence he was willing also to listen to Barnabas and Saul. It is not often that men in office, and men of rank, are thus willing to listen to the instructions of the professed ministers of God. ¶ *Who called for Barnabas and Saul.* It is probable that they had preached in Paphos, and Sergius was desirous himself of hearing the import of their new doctrine. ¶ *And desired to hear, &c.* There is no evidence that he then wished to listen to this as divine truth, or that he was anxious about his own salvation, but rather as a speculative inquiry. It was a

8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation)^a withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

9 Then Saul (who also is called

^a 2Tim. 3.8.

professed characteristic of many ancient philosophers to be willing to receive instruction from any quarter. Comp. Acts xvii. 19, 20.

8. *But Elymas the sorcerer, for so is his name by interpretation.* Elymas the magician. Elymas is the interpretation, not of the name Bar-jesus, but of the word rendered the sorcerer. It is an Arabic word, and means the same as *Magus*. It seems that he was better known by this foreign name than by his own. ¶ *Withstood them.* Resisted them. He was sensible that if the influence of Saul and Barnabas should be extended over the proconsul, that he would be seen to be an impostor, and his power be at an end. His interest, therefore, led him to oppose the gospel. His own popularity was at stake; and being governed by this, he opposed the gospel of God. The love of popularity and power, the desire of retaining some political influence, is often a strong reason why men oppose the gospel. ¶ *To turn away the deputy from the faith.* To prevent the influence of the truth on his mind; or to prevent his becoming the friend and patron of the Christians.

9. *Then Saul (who is also called Paul).* This is the last time that this apostle is called *Saul*. Henceforward he is designated by the title by which he is usually known, as *Paul*. When, or why, this change occurred in the name, has been a subject on which commentators are not agreed. From the fact that the change in the name is here first intimated, it would seem probable that it was first used in relation to him at this time. *By whom* the name was given him—whether he assumed it himself, or whether it was first given him by Christians or by Romans—is not intimated. The name is of Roman origin. In the Latin language the name *Paulus* signifies *little, dwarfish*; and some have conjectured that it was given by his parents to denote that he was small when born; others, that it was assumed or conferred in subsequent years because he was little in stature. The name is not of the same signification as the name *Saul*. This signifies one that is asked, or desired. After all the conjectures on this subject, it is probable, (1.) That this name was first used here; for before this, even after

Paul), filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him,

10 And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, *thou* child of the devil, *thou* enemy of all righteous-

his conversion, he is uniformly called *Saul*. (2.) That it was given by the Romans, as being a name with which they were more familiar, and one that was more consonant with their language and pronunciation. It was made by the change of a single letter; and probably because the name Paul was common among them, and pronounced perhaps with greater facility. (3.) Paul suffered himself to be called by this name, as he was employed chiefly among the Gentiles. It was common for names to undergo changes quite as great as this, without our being able to specify any particular cause, in passing from one language to another. Thus the Hebrew name Jochanan among the Greeks and Latins was Johannes, with the French it is Jean, with the Dutch Hans, and with us John. (*Doddridge*.) Thus Onias becomes Menelaus; Hillel, Pollio; Jakim, Alcimus; Silas, Silvanus, &c. (*Grotius*.) ¶ *Filled with the Holy Ghost.* Inspired to detect his sin; to denounce divine judgment; and to inflict punishment on him. Note, ch. ii. 4. ¶ *Set his eyes on him.* Looked at him intently.

10. *O full of all subtilty and mischief.* The word *subtilty* denotes deceit and fraud; and implies that he was practising an imposition, and that he knew it. The word rendered *mischief* (*εαδικοεργιας*) denotes properly *facility of acting*, and then *slight of hand*; sly, cunning arts, by which one imposes on another, and deceives him with a fraudulent intention. It is not elsewhere used in the New Testament. The art of Elymas consisted probably in slight of hand, legerdemain, or trick, aided by skill in the abstruse sciences, by which the ignorant might be easily imposed on. See Note, ch. viii. 9. ¶ *Child of the devil.* Being under his influence; practising his arts; promoting his designs by deceit and imposture, so that he may be called your father. Note, John viii. 44. Satan is here represented as the author of deceit, and the father of lies. ¶ *Enemy of all righteousness.* Practising deceit and iniquity, and thus opposed to righteousness and honesty. A man who lives by wickedness will, of course, be the foe of every form of integrity. A man who lives by fraud will be opposed to the truth; a pauder to the vices of men will

ness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun

hate the rules of chastity and purity; a manufacturer or vender of ardent spirits will be the enemy of temperance societies. ¶ *Wilt thou not cease to pervert.* In what way he had opposed Paul and Barnabas is not known. Probably it might be by misrepresenting their doctrines; by representing them as apostate Jews; and thus by retarding or hindering the progress of the gospel. The expression "wilt thou not cease" implies that he had been engaged sedulously in doing this, probably from the commencement of their work in the city. ¶ *The right ways of the Lord.* The straight paths, or doctrines of the Christian religion, in opposition to the crooked and perverse arts of deceivers and impostors. Straight paths denote integrity, sincerity, truth. Jer. xxxi. 9. Heb. xii. 13. Comp. Isa. xl. iii. 3, 4; xlii. 16. Luke iii. 5. *Crooked ways* denote the ways of the sinner, the deceiver, the impostor. Dent. xxxii. 5. Ps. cxxv. 5. Prov. ii. 15. Isa. lix. 8. Phil. ii. 15.

11. *The hand of the Lord is upon thee.* God shall punish thee. By this sudden and miraculous punishment, he would be awed and humbled; and the proconsul and others would be convinced that he was an impostor, and that the gospel was true. His wickedness deserved such a punishment; and at the same time that due punishment was inflicted, it was designed that the gospel should be extended by this means. In all this there was the highest evidence that Paul was under the inspiration of God. He was full of the Holy Ghost; he detected the secret feelings and desires of the heart of Elymas; and he inflicted on him a punishment that could have proceeded from none but God. That the apostles had the power of inflicting punishment in many cases, is apparent from various places in the New Testament. 1 Cor. v. 5. 1 Tim. i. 20. The punishment inflicted on Elymas, also, would be highly emblematic of the darkness and perverseness of his conduct. ¶ *Not seeing the sun for a season.* For how long a time this blindness was to continue, is nowhere specified. It was however in mercy ordained that the blindness should not be permanent and final. Nothing would be more likely to lead him to reflection and repentance than such a state of blindness. It was

for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about, seeking some to lead him by the hand.

12 Then the deputy, when he

such a manifest proof that God was opposed to him; it was such a sudden divine judgment; and it so completely cut him off from all possibility of practising his arts of deception, that it was adapted to bring him to repentance. Accordingly there is a tradition in the early church that he became a Christian. Origen says, that "Paul, by a word striking him blind, by anguish converted him to godliness." (Clark.) ¶ *A mist.* The word here used properly denotes a darkness or obscurity of the air; a cloud, &c. But it also denotes an extinction of sight by the drying up or disturbance of the humours of the eye. (Hippocrates, as quoted by Schleusner.) ¶ *And darkness.* Blindness; night. What was the precise cause or character of this miracle is not specified. ¶ *And he went about, &c.* This is a striking account of the effect of the miracle. The change was so sudden that he knew not where to go. He sought some one to guide him in the ways in which he had before been familiar.—How soon can God bring down the pride of man, and make him helpless as an infant! How easily can he touch our senses, the organs of our most exquisite pleasures, and wither all our enjoyments! How dependent are we on him for the inestimable blessings of vision! And how easily can he annihilate all the sinner's pleasures, break up all his plans, and humble him in the dust! Sight is his gift; and it is a mercy unspeakably great that he does not whelm us in thick darkness, and destroy for ever all the pleasure that through this organ is conveyed to the soul.

12. *Then the deputy . . . believed.* Was convinced that Elymas was an impostor, and that the doctrine of Paul was true. There seems no reason to doubt that his faith was that which is connected with eternal life; and if so, it is an evidence that the gospel was not always confined to the poor, and to the obscure ranks of life. ¶ *At the doctrine of the Lord.* The word *doctrine* here seems to denote, not the teaching or instruction, but the wonderful effects which were connected with the doctrine. It was particularly the miracle with which he was astonished; but he might have been also deeply impressed and amazed at the purity and sublimity of the truths which were now expanded

saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

13 Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John departing ^a from them, returned to Jerusalem.

14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue ^b on the Sabbath-day, and sat down.

^a c. 15. 38.

^b c. 18. 4.

to his view. We learn nothing further respecting him in the New Testament.

13. *Paul and his company.* Those with him—Barnabas and John—and perhaps others who had been converted at Paphos; for it was common for many of the converts to Christianity to attend on the apostles in their travels. Note, ch. ix. 30. ¶ *Loosed from Paphos.* Departed from Paphos. ¶ *They came to Perga and Pamphylia.* Pamphylia was a province of Asia Minor, lying over-against Cyprus, having Cilicia east, Lycia west, Pisidia north, and the Mediterranean south. Perga was the metropolis of Pamphylia, and was situated, not on the seacoast, but on the river Cestus, at some distance from its mouth. There was on a mountain near it a celebrated temple of Diana. ¶ *And John departing from them, &c.* Why he departed from them is unknown. It might have been from fear of danger; or from alarm in travelling so far into unknown regions. But it is plain from ch. xv. 38, that it was from some cause which was deemed blameworthy, and that his conduct now was such as to make Paul unwilling again to have him as a companion.

14. *They came to Antioch in Pisidia.* Pisidia was a province of Asia Minor, and was situated north of Pamphylia. Antioch was not in Pisidia, but within the limits of Phrygia; but it belonged to Pisidia, and was called Antioch of Pisidia to distinguish it from Antioch in Syria. Pliny, Nat. Hist. 5. 27. Strabo, 12. p. 577. (*Kuinöel. Robinson's Calmet.*) ¶ *Went into the synagogue.* Though Paul and Barnabas were on a special mission to the Gentiles, yet they availed themselves of every opportunity to offer the gospel to the Jews first.

15. *And after the reading of the law and the prophets.* See Note, Luke iv. 16. ¶ *The rulers of the synagogue.* These were persons who had the general charge of the synagogue and its service, to keep

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15 And after the reading ^c of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, *Ye men and brethren,* if ye have any word ^d of exhortation for the people, say on.

16 Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with *his* hand, said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.

17 The God of this people of

^c ver. 27.

^d Heb. 13. 22.

every thing in order, and to direct the affairs of public worship. They designated the individuals who were to read the law; and called on those whom they pleased to address the people, and had the power also of inflicting punishment, and of excommunicating, &c. (*Schleusner.*) Mark v. 22. 35. 38. Luke viii. 49; xiii. 14. Acts xviii. 8. 17. Seeing that Paul and Barnabas were Jews, though strangers, they sent to them, supposing it probable that they would wish to address their brethren. ¶ *Men and brethren.* An affectionate manner of commencing a discourse, recognising them as their own countrymen, and as originally of the same religion. ¶ *Say on.* Greek, Speak.

16. *Men of Israel.* Jews. The design of this discourse of Paul was to introduce to them the doctrine that Jesus was the Messiah. To do this, he evinced his usual wisdom and address. To have commenced at once on this would have probably excited their prejudice and rage. He, therefore, pursued a train of argument which showed that he was a firm believer in the Scriptures; that he was acquainted with the history and promises of the Old Testament; and that he was not disposed to call in question the doctrines of their fathers. The passage which had been read, perhaps Deut. i. had probably given occasion for him to pursue this train of thought. By going over, in a summary way, their history, and recounting the former dealings of God with them, he showed them that he believed the Scriptures; that a promise had been given of a Messiah; and that he had actually come according to the promise. ¶ *Ye that fear God.* Probably proselytes of the gate, who had not yet been circumcised, but who had renounced idolatry, and were accustomed to worship with them in their synagogues. ¶ *Give audience.* Hear.

17. *The God of this people.* Who has manifested himself as the peculiar friend

Israel chose our fathers,^a and exalted the people when they dwelt^b as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high^c arm brought he them out of it.

18 And about the time of forty

^a De. 7.6, 7. ^b Ps. 105.23. ^c Ex. 13.14, 16.
^d Ex. 16.35. ^e ετεροποφωρησεν, perhaps for ετερο-
 φοφωρησεν, bore, or, fed them, as a nurse beareth, or

^d years suffered¹ he their manners in the wilderness.

19 And when he had destroyed^e seven nations in the land of Canaan^f he divided their land to them by lot.

^f feedeth her child. De. 1.31, according to the LXX; and so Chrysostom.

^e De. 7.1. ^f Jos. 14, &c.

and protector of this nation. This implied a belief that he had been particularly *their* God; a favourite doctrine of the Jews, and one that would conciliate their favour towards Paul. ¶ *Of Israel.* The Jews. ¶ *Chose our fathers.* Selected the nation to be a chosen and peculiar people to himself. Deut. vii. 6, 7. ¶ *And exalted the people.* Raised them up from a low and depressed state of bondage. He elevated them from a prostrate state of slavery to freedom, and to peculiar privileges as a nation. ¶ *When they dwell as strangers in Egypt.* ἐν τῇ παροικίᾳ. This properly refers to their dwelling there as foreigners. They were always strangers there in a strange land. It was not their home. They never mingled with the people; never became constituent parts of the government; never united with their usages and laws. They were a strange, separate, depressed people there; not less so than Africans are strangers, and foreigners, and a depressed and degraded people in this land. Gen. xxxvi. 7. Ex. vi. 4; xxii. 21; xxiii. 9. Lev. xix. 34. Deut. x. 19. ¶ *And with an high arm.* This expression denotes great power. The *arm* denotes strength, as that by which we perform any thing. A *high arm*, an arm lifted up, or stretched out, denotes that strength exerted to the utmost. The children of Israel are represented as having been delivered with an "outstretched arm." Deut. xxvi. 8. Ex. vi. 6. "With a strong hand." Ex. vi. 1. Reference is made in these places to the plagues inflicted on Egypt, by which the Israelites were delivered; to their passage through the Red Sea; to their victories over their enemies, &c.

18. *And about the time of forty years.* They were this time going from Egypt to the land of Canaan. Ex. xvi. 35. Num. xxxiii. 38. ¶ *Suffered he their manners.* This passage has been very variously rendered. See the margin. Syriac, "He nourished them," &c. Arabic, "He blessed them, and nourished them," &c. The word is not elsewhere used in the

New Testament. The word properly means to *tolerate*, or *endure the conduct* of any one, implying that that conduct is evil, and tends to provoke to punishment. This is doubtless its meaning here. Probably Paul referred to the passage in Deut. i. 21, "The Lord thy God bare thee." But instead of this word, ετεροποφωρησεν many MSS. read ετεροτροφωρησεν, he sustained or nourished. This reading was followed by the Syriac, Arabic, and has been admitted by Griesbach into the text. This is also found in the Septuagint, in Deut. i. 31, which place Paul doubtless referred to. This would well suit the connexion of the passage; and a change of a single letter might easily have occurred in a MS. It adds to the probability that this is the true reading, that it accords with Deut. i. 31. Num. xi. 12. Deut. xxxii. 10. It is furthermore not probable that Paul would have commenced a discourse by reminding them of the obstinacy and wickedness of the nation. Such a course would rather tend to exasperate than to conciliate; but by reminding them of the *mercies* of God to them, and showing them that God had been their protector, he was better fitting them for his main purpose—that of showing them the kindness of the God of their fathers, in sending to them a Saviour. ¶ *In the wilderness.* The desert through which they passed in going from Egypt to Canaan.

19. *And when he had destroyed.* Subdued; cast out; or extirpated *as nations*. It does not mean that all were put to death, for many of them were left in the land; but that they were subdued as nations, they were broken up and overcome. Deut. vii. 1, "And hath cast out many nations before them," &c. ¶ *Seven nations.* The Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Deut. vii. 1. Josh. iii. 10. Neh. ix. 8. ¶ *In the land of Canaan.* The whole land was called by the name of one of the principal nations. This was the promised land; the holy land, &c. ¶ *He*

20 And after that, he gave *unto them* judges, ^a about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.

^a Judg. 2. 16.

^b 1 Sam. 8. 5.

^c 1 Sam. 10. 1.

divided, &c. See an account of this in Josh. xiv. xv. The *lot* was often used among the Jews to determine important questions. Note, ch. i. 26.

20. *He gave unto them judges.* Men who were raised up in an extraordinary manner to administer the affairs of the nation, to defend it from enemies, &c. See Judg. ii. 16. ¶ *About the space of four hundred and fifty years.* This is a most difficult passage, and has exercised all the ingenuity of chronologists. The ancient versions agree with the present Greek text. The *difficulty* has been to reconcile it with what is said in 1 Kings vi. 1, "And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel... he began to build the house of the Lord." Now if to the forty years that the children of Israel were in the wilderness, there be added the four hundred and fifty said in Acts to have been passed under the administration of the judges, and about seventeen years of the time of Joshua, forty for Samuel and the reign of Saul together, and forty for the reign of David, and three of Solomon before he began to build the temple, the sum will be five hundred and ninety years, a period greater by one hundred and ten years than that mentioned in 1 Kings vi. 1. Various ways have been proposed to meet the difficulty. Doddridge renders it, "After these transactions, [which lasted] four hundred and fifty years, he gave them a series of judges," &c., reckoning from the birth of Isaac, and supposing that Paul meant to refer to this whole time. But to this there are serious objections. (1.) It is a forced and constrained interpretation, and one manifestly made to meet a difficulty. (2.) There is no propriety in commencing this period at the birth of *Isaac*. That was in no manner remarkable, so far as Paul's narrative was concerned; and Paul had not even referred to it. This same solution is offered also by Calovius, Mill, Lud, and De Dieu. Luther and Beza think it should be read *three* hundred, instead of *four* hundred. But this is a mere conjecture, without any authority from MSS. Vitringa and some others suppose that the text has been corrupted by some transcriber,

21 And afterward they ^b desired a king; and God gave unto them Saul ^c the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.

who has inserted this without authority. But there is no evidence of this; and the MSS. and ancient versions are uniform. None of these explanations are satisfactory. In the solution of the difficulty we may remark, (1.) That nothing is more perplexing than the chronology of ancient facts. The difficulty is found in all writings; in profane as well as sacred. Mistakes are so easily made in transcribing numbers where *letters* are used instead of writing the words at length, that we are not to wonder at such errors. (2.) Paul would naturally use the chronology which was in current, common use among the Jews. It was not his business to *settle* such points; but he would speak of them as they were usually spoken of, and refer to them as others did. (3.) There is reason to believe that that which is here mentioned was the *common* chronology of his time. It accords remarkably with that which is used by Josephus. Thus, Antiq. b. vii. ch. iii. § 1, Josephus says expressly that Solomon "began to build the temple in the fourth year of his reign, *five hundred and ninety-two years* after the Exodus out of Egypt," &c. This would allow forty years for their being in the wilderness, seventeen for Joshua, forty for Samuel and Saul, forty for the reign of David, and *four hundred and fifty-two* years for the time of the judges and the times of anarchy that intervened. This remarkable coincidence shows that this was the chronology which was then used, and which Paul had in view. (4.) This chronology has the authority, also, of many eminent names: See Lightfoot, and Boyle's Lectures, ch. xx. In what way this computation of Josephus and the Jews originated, it is not necessary here to inquire. It is a sufficient solution of the difficulty that *Paul spoke in their usual manner*, without departing from his regular object by settling a point of chronology.

21. *And afterward they desired a king* See 1 Sam. viii. 5. Hos. xiii. 10. It was predicted that they would have a king Deut. xvii. 14, 15. ¶ *Saul the son of Cis.* Cis is the Greek mode of writing the Hebrew name *Kish*. In the Old Testament it is uniformly written *Kish*, and it is to be regretted that this has not been retained in the New Testament. See 1 Sam.

22 And when ^a he had removed him, he raised up unto them David ^b to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the *son* of Jesse, a man ^c after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.

23 Of this man's seed hath God, according to *his* promise, ^d raised unto Israel ^e a Saviour, Jesus :

24 When John ^f had first preach-

^a 1 Sam. 31. 6.

^b 2 Sam. 5. 3.

^c 1 Sam. 13. 14.

xi. 1. ¶ *By the space of forty years.* During forty years. The Old Testament has not mentioned the time during which Saul reigned. Josephus says (Antiq. b. vi. ch. xiv. § 9) that he reigned eighteen years while Samuel was alive, and twenty-two years after his death. But Dr. Doddridge (Note in loco) has shown that this cannot be correct, and that he probably reigned, as some copies of Josephus have it, but two years after the death of Samuel. Many critics suppose that the term of forty years here mentioned includes also the time in which Samuel judged the people. This supposition does not violate the text in this place, and may be probable. See Doddridge and Grotius on the place.

22. *And when he had removed him.* This was done because he rebelled against God in sparing the sheep and oxen and valuable property of Amalek, together with Agag the king, when he was commanded to destroy all. 1 Sam. xv. 8—23. He was put to death in a battle with the Philistines. 1 Sam. xxxi. 1—6. The phrase “when he removed him” refers probably to his *rejection* as a king, and not to his death; for David was anointed king before the death of Saul, and almost immediately after the rejection of Saul on account of his rebellion in the business of Amalek. See 1 Sam. xvi. 12, 13. ¶ *He gave testimony.* He bore witness. 1 Sam. xiii. 14. ¶ *I have found David,* &c. This is not quoted *literally*, but contains the *substance* of what is expressed in various places. Compare 1 Sam. xiii. 14, with Ps. lxxxix. 20, and 1 Sam. xvi. 1. 12. ¶ *A man after mine own heart.* This expression is found in 1 Sam. xiii. 14. The connexion shows that it means simply a man who would not be rebellious and disobedient as Saul was, but would do his will, and keep his commandments. This refers, doubtless, rather to the public than to the private character of David; or to his character *as a king*. It means that he would

ed, before his coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

25 And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not *he*: but, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of *his* feet I am not worthy to loose.

26 Men *and* brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and who-

^d Ps. 132. 11.

^e Matt. i. 21.

^f Matt. 8. 1—11.

make the will of God the great rule and law of his reign, in contradistinction from Saul, who, *as a king*, had disobeyed God. At the same time it is true that the *prevailing* character of David, as a pious, humble, devoted man, was, that he was a man after God's own heart, and was beloved by him as a saint and a holy man. He had faults; he committed sin; but who is free from it? He was guilty of great offences; but he also evinced, in a degree equally eminent, *repentance* (see Ps. li.); and not less in his private than his public character did he evince those traits which were *prevailingly* such as accorded with *the heart*, i. e. the earnest desires of God. ¶ *Which shall fulfill all my will.* Saul had not done it. He had disobeyed God in a case where he had received an express command. The characteristic of David would be that he would *obey* the commands of God. That David *did* this—that he maintained the worship of God, opposed idolatry, and sought to promote universal obedience to God among the people—is expressly recorded of him. 1 Kings xiv. 8, 9, “And thou [Jeroboam] hast not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine eyes,” &c. 1 Kings xv. 3. 5.

23. *Of this man's seed.* Of his posterity. ¶ *According to his promise.* Note, Acts ii.

30. ¶ *Raised unto Israel.* Note, Acts ii. 30. ¶ *A Saviour, Jesus.* Note, Matt. i. 21.

24. *When John had first preached,* &c. After John had preached, and prepared the way. Matt. iii.

25. *And as John fulfilled his course.* As he was engaged in completing his work. His ministry is called a *course* or *race*, that which was to be *run*, or completed. ¶ *He said,* &c. These are not the precise words which the evangelists have recorded, but the sense is the same. Note, John i. 20. Matt. iii. 11.

26. *Men and brethren.* Paul now ex-

soever among you feareth God, to you ^a is the word of this salvation sent.

27 For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath-day, they ^b have fulfilled *them* in condemning *him*.

28 And though they found no cause of death in *him*, yet desired

^a Matt. 10. 6.

^b Luke 24. 20, 44.

horts them to embrace the Lord Jesus as the Messiah. He uses therefore the most respectful and fraternal language. ¶ *Children of the stock of Abraham*. Descendants of Abraham; who regard Abraham as your ancestor. He means here to address particularly the native-born Jews; and this appellation is used because they valued themselves highly on account of their descent from Abraham (Note, Matt. iii. 9); and because the promise of the Messiah had been specially given to him. ¶ *And whosoever, &c.* Proselytes. Note, ver. 16. ¶ *Is the word of this salvation sent*. This message of salvation. It was sent *particularly* to the Jewish people. The Saviour was sent to that nation (Matt. xv. 24); and the design was to offer to them first the message of life. See Note, ver. 46.

27. *Because they knew him not*. The statement in this verse is designed, not to reproach the Jews at Jerusalem, but to introduce the fact that Jesus had died, and had risen again. With great wisdom and tenderness, he speaks of his murderers in such a manner as not to exasperate, but as far as possible to mitigate their crime. There was sufficient guilt in the murder of the Son of God to overwhelm the nation with alarm, even after all that could be said to mitigate the deed. See Acts ii. 23, 36, 37. When Paul says, "They knew him not," he means that they did not know him to be the Messiah (see 1 Cor. ii. 8); they were ignorant of the true meaning of the prophecies of the Old Testament; they regarded him as an impostor. (See Note, Acts iii. 17.) ¶ *Nor yet the voices of the prophets*. Neither the meaning of the predictions in the Old Testament, respecting the Messiah. They expected a prince, and a conqueror, but did not expect a Messiah poor and despised, and a man of sorrows, and that was to die on a cross. ¶ *Which are read*

they Pilate that he should be slain.

29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took *him* down from the tree, and laid *him* in a sepulchre.

30 But God raised him from the dead:

31 And he was seen ^c many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.

^c c. 1. 3.

every Sabbath-day. In the synagogues. Though the Scriptures were read so constantly, yet they were ignorant of their true meaning. They were blinded by pride, and prejudice, and preconceived opinions. Men may often in this way read the Bible a good part of their lives, and for want of attention, or of a humble mind, never understand it. ¶ *They have fulfilled them, &c.* By putting him to death they have accomplished what was foretold.

23. *And though they found, &c.* They found no crime which deserved death. This is conclusively shown by the trial itself. After all their efforts; after the treason of Judas; after their employing false witnesses; still no crime was laid to his charge. The sanhedrim condemned him for blasphemy; and yet they knew that they could not substantiate this charge before Pilate, and they therefore endeavoured to procure his condemnation on the ground of sedition. Comp. Luke xxii. 70, 71, with xxiii. 1, 2. ¶ *Yet desired they Pilate, &c.* Matt. xxvii. 1, 2. Luke xxiii. 4, 5.

29. *They took him down, &c.* That is, it was done by the Jews. Not that it was done by those who put him to death, but by Joseph of Arimathea, a Jew, and by Nicodemus, and their companions. Paul is speaking of what was done to Jesus by *the Jews* at Jerusalem; and he does not affirm that the *same* persons put him to death and laid him in a tomb, but that all this was done *by Jews*. See John xix. 38, 39.

30. *But God raised him, &c.* Note, ch. ii. 23, 24.

31. *And he was seen*. See Note at the end of Matthew. ¶ *Many days*. Forty days, ch. i. 3. ¶ *Of them which came up*. By the apostles particularly. He was seen by others; but they are especially mentioned as having been chosen for

32 And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise^a which was made unto the fathers,

33 God hath fulfilled the same

^a Rom. 4. 13.

this object, to bear witness to him, and as having been particularly qualified for it.

32. *And we.* We who are here present. Paul and Barnabas. ¶ *Declare unto you glad tidings.* We preach the gospel—the good news. To a Jew, nothing could be more grateful intelligence than that the Messiah had come; to a sinner convinced of his sins nothing can be more cheering than to hear of a Saviour. ¶ *The promise, &c.* The promise here refers to *all* that had been spoken in the Old Testament respecting the advent, sufferings, death, and resurrection of Christ.

33. *God hath fulfilled.* God has completed or carried into effect by the resurrection of Jesus. He does not say that all the promise had reference to *his resurrection*; but his being raised up completed or perfected the fulfilment of the promises which had been made respecting him. ¶ *In the second psalm.* ver. 7. ¶ *Thou art my Son.* This psalm has been usually understood as referring to the Messiah. See Note, ch. iv. 25. ¶ *This day have I begotten thee.* It is evident that Paul uses the expression here as implying that the Lord Jesus is called the Son of God because he raised him up from the dead; and that he means to imply that it was for *this* reason that he is so called in the psalm. This interpretation of an inspired apostle fixes the meaning of this passage in the psalm; and proves that it is not there used with reference to the doctrine of eternal generation, or to his incarnation, but that he is here called his Son because he was raised from the dead. And this interpretation accords with the scope of the psalm. In ver. 1—3 the psalmist records the combination of the rulers of the earth against the Messiah, and their efforts to cast off his reign. This was done, and the Messiah was rejected. All this pertains, not to his previous existence, but to the Messiah on the earth. In ver. 4, 5, the psalmist shows that their efforts should not be successful; that God would laugh at their designs, that is, that their plans should not succeed. In ver. 6, 7, he shows that the Messiah would be es-

unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou^b art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

^b Ps. 2. 7.

tablished as a king; that this was the fixed decree, that he had begotten him for this. All this is represented as *subsequent* to the raging of the heathen, and to the counsel of the kings against him, and *must*, therefore, refer, not to his eternal generation, or his incarnation, but to something succeeding his death; that is, to his resurrection, and establishment as king at the right hand of God. This interpretation by the apostle Paul proves therefore that this passage is not to be used to establish the doctrine of the eternal generation of Christ. Christ is called the Son of God from various reasons. In Luke i. 35, because he was begotten by the Holy Ghost. In this place, on account of his resurrection. In Rom. i. 4, it is also said, that he was declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead. See Note on that place. The resurrection from the dead is represented as in some sense *the beginning* of life, and it is with reference to this that the terms *Son*, and *begotten from the dead*, are used, as the birth of a child is the beginning of life. Thus Christ is said, Col. i. 18, to be “the first-born from the dead,” and thus in Rev. i. 5, he is called “the first-begotten of the dead,” and with reference to *this renewal* or beginning of life he is called a *Son*. In whatever other senses he is called a *Son* in the New Testament, yet it is here proved, (1.) That he is called a Son from his resurrection; and (2.) That this is the sense in which the expression in the psalm is to be used. ¶ *This day.* The day in the mind of the psalmist, and of Paul, of his resurrection. Many efforts have been made, and much learned criticism has been expended, to prove that this refers to eternity, or to his pre-existence. But the signification of the word, which never refers to eternity, and the connexion, and the obvious intention of the speaker, is against this. Paul understood this manifestly of the resurrection. This settles the inquiry, and this is the *indispensable* interpretation in the psalm itself. ¶ *Have I begotten thee.* This evidently cannot be understood in a *literal* sense. It *literally* refers to the relation of an earthly father to his children; but in no

34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, *now* no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure ¹ mercies of David.

¹ τὰ ἁγία, *holy, or, just things; which word the*

such sense can it be applied to the relation of God the Father to the Son. It *must* therefore be figurative. The word sometimes figuratively means to produce, to cause to exist in any way. 2 Tim. ii. 23, "Unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do *gender* [beget] strifes." It refers also to the labours of the apostles in securing the conversion of sinners to the gospel. 1 Cor. iv. 15, "In Christ Jesus I have *begotten* you through the gospel." Phil. ver. 10, "Whom [Onesimus] I have *begotten* in my bonds." It is applied to Christians (John i. 13), "Which were born [begotten] not of blood, &c. but of God." iii. 3, "Except a man be born [begotten] again," &c. In all these places it is used in a figurative sense to denote the commencement of spiritual life by the power of God attending the truth; raising up sinners from the death of sin; or so producing spiritual life as that they should sustain to God the relation of sons. Thus he raised up Christ from the dead; imparted life to his body; by his own power restored him; and hence is said figuratively to have *begotten* him from the dead, and hence sustains towards the risen Saviour the relation of Father. Comp. Col. i. 18. Rev. i. 5. Heb. i. 5.

34. And as concerning. In further proof of that. To show that he actually did it, he proceeds to quote another passage of Scripture. ¶ *No more to return to corruption.* The word *corruption* is usually employed to denote putrefaction, or the mouldering away of a body in the grave; its returning to its native dust. But it is certain (ver. 35. Note, ch. ii. 27) that the body of Christ never in this sense saw corruption. The word is therefore used to denote *death*, or *the grave*, the cause and place of corruption. The word is thus used in the Septuagint. It means here simply that he should not again *die*. ¶ *He said on this wise.* He said thus. (ὅτως.) ¶ *I will give you.* This quotation is made from Isa. lv. 3. It is quoted from the Septuagint, with a change of but one word, not affecting the sense. In Isaiah the passage does not refer particularly to the *resurrection* of the Messiah; nor is it the design of Paul to affirm that it does. His object in this verse is not to prove that he would *rise from the dead*; but that *being*

35 Wherefore he saith also ³⁵ another *psalm*, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

LXX, both in the place of Isa. 55. 3, and in many others, use for that which is in the Hebrew, *mercies*.
α Ps. 16. 10.

risen, he would *not again die*. That the passage in Isaiah refers to the Messiah there can be no doubt. ver. 1. 4. The passage here quoted is an address to the people, an assurance to them that the promise made to David should be performed, a solemn declaration that he would make an everlasting covenant with them through the Messiah, the promised descendant of David. ¶ *The sure mercies of David.* The word *mercies* here refers to the *promise* made to David; the *mercy* or *favour* shown to him by promising to him a successor that should not fail to sit on his throne. 2 Sam. vii. 16. Ps. lxxxix. 4, 5; cxxii. 11, 12. These mercies and these promises are called "*sure*," as being true, or unfailing; they should certainly be accomplished. Comp. 2 Cor. i. 20. The word *David* here does not refer, as many have supposed, to the Messiah, but to the king of Israel. God made to David a promise, a certain pledge; he bestowed on him this special *mercy*, in promising that he should have a successor who should sit for ever on his throne. This promise was understood by the Jews, and is often referred to in the New Testament, as relating to the Messiah. And Paul here says that that promise here is fulfilled. The only question is, how it refers to the subject on which Paul was immediately discoursing. That point was not mainly to prove his *resurrection*, but to show particularly that he would *never die* again; or that he would for ever live and reign. And the argument is, that as God had promised that David should have a successor who should sit for ever on his throne; and as this prediction now terminated in the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, it followed, that, as that promise was sure and certain, he would never die again. He must live, if the sure promise was fulfilled. And though he had been put to death, yet under that general promise was the certainty that he would live again. It was impossible, the meaning is, that the Messiah, the promised successor of David, the perpetual occupier of his throne, should remain under the power of death. Under this assurance the church now reposes its hopes. Zion's King now lives, ever able to vindicate and save his people.

35. Wherefore. Διό. To the same in-

36 For David,¹ after he had served his own generation by the will of God,^a fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:

37 But he, whom God^b raised again, saw no corruption.

38 Be it known unto you, therefore, men *and* brethren, that through

¹ or, after he had in his own age served the will of God. a 1Ki.2.10. b c.2.24.

tent, or end. In the proof of the same thing—that he must rise and live for ever. ¶ *He saith.* God says by David; or David declares the promises made by God. ¶ *In another psalm.* Ps. xvi. 10. ¶ *Thou wilt not suffer, &c.* See this explained in Notes, ch. ii. 27.

36. *For David, &c.* This verse is designed to show that the passage in Ps. xvi. could not refer to David, and must therefore relate to some other person. In ver. 37, it is affirmed that this *could* refer to no one, in fact, but to the Lord Jesus. ¶ *After he had served his generation.* See the margin. Syriac, 'David in his own generation having served the will of God, and slept,' &c. Arabic, 'David served in his own age, and saw God.' The margin probably most correctly expresses the sense of the passage. To serve a generation, or an age, is an unusual and almost unintelligible expression. ¶ *Fell on sleep.* Greek, Slept, that is, *died*. This is the usual word to denote the death of saints. It is used of David in 1 Kings ii. 10. Note, Matt. xxvii. 52. ¶ *And was laid unto, &c.* And was buried with his fathers, &c. 1 Kings ii. 10. ¶ *And saw corruption.* Remained in the grave, and returned to his native dust. See this point argued more at length by Peter, in Acts ii. 29—31, and explained in the Notes on that place.

37. *But he, whom God raised again.* The Lord Jesus. ¶ *Saw no corruption.* Was raised without undergoing the usual change that succeeds death. As David *had* returned to corruption, and the Lord Jesus had *not*, it followed that this passage in Ps. xvi. referred to the Messiah.

38. *Be it known, &c.* Paul, having proved his resurrection, and shown that he was the Messiah, now states the *benefits* that were to be derived from his death. ¶ *Through this man.* See Note, Luke xxiv. 47.

39. *And by him.* By means of him; by his sufferings and death. ¶ *All that believe.* Note, Mark xvi. 16. ¶ *Are justified.*

^c this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:

39 And by him,^d all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

40 Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in ^e the prophets;

^c Dan.9.24. Lu.24.47. 1Jno.2.12. ^d Isa.53.11. Hab. 2.4.Rom.3.23; 8.3. ^e Isa.29.14. Hab.1.5.

Are regarded and treated as if they were righteous. They are pardoned, and admitted to the favour of God, and treated as pardoned sinners, and as if they had not offended. See this point explained in the Notes on Rom. i. 17; iii. 24, 25; iv. 1—8. ¶ *From all things.* From the guilt of all offences. All will be pardoned. ¶ *From which ye could not, &c.* The law of Moses commanded what was to be done. It appointed sacrifices and offerings, as typical of a greater sacrifice. But the same apostle has fully shown in the epistle to the Hebrews that those sacrifices could not take away sin. ch. ix. 7—14; x. 1—4. 11. The design of the law was not to reveal a way of pardon. That was reserved to be the peculiar purpose of the gospel. ¶ *The law of Moses.* The commands and institutions which he, under the direction of God, established.

40. *Beware, therefore.* Avoid that which is threatened. It will come on *some*; and Paul exhorted his hearers to beware lest it should come on them. It was the more important to caution them against this danger, as the Jews held that *they* were safe. ¶ *Lest that come.* That calamity; that threatened punishment. ¶ *In the prophets.* In that part of the Scriptures called "the prophets." The Jews divided the Old Testament into three parts, of which "the book of the prophets" was one. Note, Luke xxiv. 44. The place where this is recorded is Hab. i. 5. It is not taken from the Hebrew, but substantially from the Septuagint. The original design of the threatening was to announce the destruction that would come upon the nation by the Chaldeans. The original threatening was fulfilled. But it was as *applicable* to the Jews in the time of Paul as in the time of Habakkuk. The principle of the passage is, that if they held in contempt the doings of God, they would perish. The work which God was to do by means of the Chaldeans was so fearful, so unusual, and so remarkable, that they would not believe it in time to

41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish : for I work a work in your days, a work which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

avoid the calamity. In the same way, that which God did in giving a Messiah so little in accordance with their expectation ; the manner of the introduction of his kingdom by miracles ; and the gift of his Spirit, was so much at variance with their expectations, that they might see it, yet disbelieve it ; they might have the fullest proof, and yet despise it ; they might wonder, and be amazed and astonished, and unable to account for it, and yet refuse to believe it, and be destroyed. ¶ *Behold, ye despisers.* Heb. "Behold, ye among the heathen." The change from this expression to "ye despisers," was made by the Septuagint translators, by a very slight change in the Hebrew word—probably from a variation in the copy which they used. It arose from reading בוגדים instead of בונים, *Bogedim* instead of *Baggoim*. The Syriac, the Arabic, as well as the LXX. follow this reading. ¶ *And wonder.* Heb. "and regard, and wonder marvellously." ¶ *And perish.* This is not in the Hebrew, but is in the Septuagint and the Arabic. The word means literally to be removed from the sight, to disappear. And then to corrupt, defile, destroy. Mat. vi. 16. 19. The word, however, may mean to be suffused with shame ; to be overwhelmed, and confounded (*Schleusner*), and it may perhaps have this meaning here, answering to the Hebrew. The word used here is not that which is commonly employed to denote eternal perdition ; though Paul seems to use it with reference to their destruction for rejecting the gospel. ¶ *For I work a work.* I do a thing. The thing to which the prophet Habakkuk referred was, that God would bring upon them the Chaldeans, that would destroy the temple and nation. In like manner Paul says, that God in that time might bring upon the nation similar calamities. By rejecting the Messiah and his gospel, and by persevering in wickedness, they would bring upon themselves the destruction of the temple, and city, and nation. It was this threatened destruction doubtless to which the apostle referred. ¶ *Which ye shall in no wise believe.* Which you will not believe. So remarkable, so unusual, so surpassing any thing which had occurred.

42 And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.

1 in the week between, or, in the Sabbath between.

The original reference in Habakkuk is to the destruction of the temple by the Chaldeans ; a thing which the Jews would not suppose *could* happen. The temple was so splendid ; it had been built by the direction of God ; it had been so long under his protection ; that they would suppose that it *could not* be given into the hands of their enemies to be demolished. And even though it were predicted by a prophet of God, still they would not believe it. The same feelings the Jews would have respecting the temple and city in the time of Paul. Though it was foretold by the Messiah, yet they were so confident that it was protected by God, that they would not believe that it could *possibly* be destroyed. The same infatuation seems to have possessed them during the siege of the city by the Romans. ¶ *Though a man, &c.* Though it be plainly predicted. We may learn, (1.) That men may see, and be amazed at the works of God, and yet be destroyed. (2.) There may be a prejudice so obstinate that even a divine revelation will not remove it. (3.) The fancied security of sinners will not save them. (4.) There are men who will not believe in the possibility of their being lost, though it be declared by the prophets, by apostles, by the Saviour, and by God. They will still remain in fancied security, and suffer nothing to alarm or rouse them. But (5.) The fancied security of the Jews furnished no safety against the Babylonians or the Romans. Nor will the indifference and unconcern of sinners furnish any security against the dreadful wrath of God. Yet there are multitudes who live amidst the displays of God's power and mercy in the redemption of sinners, who witness the effects of his goodness and truth in revivals of religion, who live to *despise* it all ; who are amazed and confounded by it ; and who shall yet perish.

42. *And when the Jews, &c.* There is a great variety in the MSS. on this verse ; and in the ancient versions. Griesbach and Knapp read it, "And when they were gone out, they besought them that these words might be spoken," &c. The Syriac reads it, "When they departed from them, they sought from them that these words might be spoken to them on

43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas : who speaking to them, persuaded them to continue ^a in the grace of God.

44 And the next Sabbath-day

a c.14.22. Heb.6.11,12;12.15.

another Sabbath." The Arabic, "Some of the synagogue of the Jews asked of them that they would exhort the Gentiles with them," &c. If these readings be correct, then the meaning is, that some of the Jews exhorted the apostles to proclaim these truths at some other time; particularly to the Gentiles. The MSS. greatly vary in regard to the passage, and it is perhaps impossible to determine the true reading. If the present reading in the English translation is to be regarded as genuine—of which, however, there is very little evidence—the meaning is, that a *part* of the Jews, perhaps a majority of them, rejected the message, and went out, though many of them followed Paul and Barnabas. ver. 43. ¶ *The Gentiles besought.* This expression is wanting in the Vulgate, Coptic, Arabic, and Syriac versions, and in a great many MSS. (*Mill.*) It is omitted by Griesbach, Knapp, &c. and is probably spurious. Among other reasons which may be suggested why it is not genuine, this is one, that it is not evident or probable that the *Gentiles* were in the habit of attending the synagogue. Those who attended there were called *proselytes*. The expression, if genuine, might mean, either that the *Gentiles* besought, or that *they* besought the Gentiles. The latter would be the more probable meaning. ¶ *The next Sabbath.* The margin has probably the correct rendering of the passage. The meaning of the verse is, that a wish was expressed that these doctrines might be repeated to them in the intermediate time before the next Sabbath.

43. *When the congregation.* Greek, When the *synagogue* was dissolved. ¶ *Broken up.* Dismissed. It does not mean that it was broken up by violence or disorder. It was dismissed in the usual way. ¶ *Many of the Jews.* Probably the majority of them rejected the message. See ver. 45. Still a deep impression was made on many of them. ¶ *And religious proselytes.* See ver. 16. Comp. Note, Matt. xxiii. 15. Greek, *Proselytes worshipping.* ¶ *Persuaded them to continue, &c.* It would appear

came a most the whole city together, to hear the word of God.

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting ^b and blaspheming.

b c.18.6.

from this, that they professedly received the truth and embraced the Lord Jesus, This success was remarkable, and shows the power of the gospel when it is preached faithfully to men. ¶ *In the grace of God.* In his favour—in the faith, and prayer, and obedience, which would be connected with his favour. The *gospel* is called the *grace or favour* of God, and they were exhorted to persevere in their attachment to it.

44. *And the next Sabbath-day.* This was the regular day for worship, and it was natural that a greater multitude should convene on that day than on the other days of the week. ¶ *Came almost the whole city.* Whether this was in the synagogue is not affirmed; but it is probable that that was the place where the multitude convened. The news of the presence of the apostles, and of their doctrines, had been circulated doubtless by the Gentiles who had heard them, and curiosity attracted the multitude to hear them. Comp. Note, ver. 7.

45. *They were filled with envy.* Greek, *Zeal.* The word here denotes *wrath, indignation*, that such multitudes should be disposed to hear a message which they rejected, and which threatened to overthrow their religion. ¶ *Spake against.* Opposed the doctrine that Jesus was the Messiah; that the Messiah would be humble, lowly, despised, and put to death, &c. ¶ *Contradicting.* Contradicting the apostles. This was evidently done in their presence, ver. 46, and would cause great tumult and disorder. ¶ *And blaspheming.* Note, Matt. ix. 3. The sense evidently is, that they reproached and vilified Jesus of Nazareth; they spake of him with contempt and scorn. To speak thus of him is denominated *blasphemy*. Luke xxii. 65. When men are enraged, they little regard the words which they utter, and little care how they may be estimated by God. When men attached to sect and party, in religion or politics, have no good arguments to employ, they attempt to overwhelm their adversaries by bitter and reproachful words. Men in the heat of strife, and in

46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first ^a have been spoken to you : but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we ^b turn to the Gentiles.

^a Matt. 10. 6. Lu. 24. 47. Rom. 1. 16.

professed zeal for peculiar doctrines, and for sect and party, more frequently utter *blasphemy* than they are aware. Precious and pure doctrines are often thus vilified, because *we* do not believe them; and the heart of the Saviour is pierced anew, and his cause bleeds by the wrath and wickedness of his professed friends. Comp. ch. viii. 6.

46. *Waxed bold.* Became bold; spake boldly and openly. They were not terrified by their strife, or alarmed by their opposition. The contradictions and blasphemies of sinners often show that their consciences are alarmed; that the truth has taken effect; and then is not the time to shrink, but to declare more fearlessly the truth. ¶ *It was necessary.* It was so designed; so commanded. They regarded it as their duty to offer the gospel *first* to their own countrymen. Note, Luke xxiv. 47. ¶ *Ye put it from you.* Ye reject it. ¶ *And judge yourselves.* By your conduct, by your rejecting it, you declare this. The word *judge* here does not mean *they expressed such an opinion*, or that *they regarded themselves* as unworthy of eternal life; for they thought just the reverse; but that by their conduct they *condemned themselves*. By such conduct they did in fact *pass sentence* on themselves, and show that they were unworthy of eternal life, and of having the offer any farther made to them.—Sinners by their conduct do in fact condemn themselves, and show that they are not only unfit to be saved, but that they have advanced so far in wickedness that there is *no hope* of their salvation, and no propriety in offering them, any farther, eternal life. Note, Matt. vii. 6. ¶ *Unworthy, &c.* Unfit to be saved. They had *deliberately* and *solemnly* rejected the gospel, and thus shown that they were not fitted to enter into everlasting life.—When men, even but *once*, deliberately and solemnly *reject* the offers of God's mercy, it greatly endangers their salvation. The *probability* is, that they then put the cup of salvation for ever away from themselves. The gospel produces an effect wherever it is preached. And when sinners are hard-

47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*, ^c I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified

^b Deut. 32. 21. Matt. 21. 43. Rom. 10. 19. ^c Isa. 49. 6.

ened, and spurn the gospel, it may often be the duty of ministers to turn their efforts towards others, where they may have more prospect of success. A man will not long labour on a rocky, barren, sterile soil, when there is near him a rich and fertile valley that will abundantly reward the pains of cultivation. ¶ *Lo, we turn, &c.* We shall offer salvation to them, and devote ourselves to seeking their salvation.

47. *For so, &c.* Paul, as usual, appeals to the Scriptures in order to justify his course. He here appeals to the *Old Testament*, rather than to the command of the Saviour, because the Jews recognised the authority of their own Scriptures, while they would have turned in scorn from the command of Jesus of Nazareth. ¶ *I have set thee, &c.* I have constituted or appointed thee. This passage is found in Isa. xlix. 6. That it refers to the Messiah there can be no doubt. From the xlth chapter of Isaiah to the end of the prophecies, Isaiah had a primary and main reference to the times of the Messiah. ¶ *To be a light.* Note, John i. 4. ¶ *To the Gentiles* This was in accordance with the uniform doctrines of Isaiah. Isa. xlii. 1; liv. 3; lx. 3. 5. 16; lxi. 6. 9; lxii. 2; lxvi. 12. Comp. Rom. xv. 9—12. ¶ *For salvation.* To save sinners. ¶ *Unto the ends of the earth.* To all lands; in all nations. Note, ch. i. 8.

48. *When the Gentiles heard this.* Heard that the gospel was to be preached to them. The doctrine of the Jews had been that salvation was confined to themselves. The Gentiles rejoiced that from the mouths of Jews they now heard a different doctrine. ¶ *They glorified the word of the Lord.* They honoured it as a message from God; they recognised and received it as the word of God. The expression conveys the idea of *praise* on account of it, and of *reverence* for the message as the word of God. ¶ *And as many as were ordained.* ὅσοι ἦσαν τεταγμένοι. Syriac, "Who were *destined*," or constituted. Vulgate, "As many as were fore-ordained (quotquot erant præordinati) to eternal life, believed." There has been

the word of the Lord: and ^a as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed.

49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and

a c.2.47. Rom.8.30.

much difference of opinion in regard to this expression. One class of commentators have supposed that it refers to the doctrine of election—to *God's ordaining* men to eternal life; and another class, to their being *disposed themselves* to embrace the gospel—to those among them who did not reject and despise the gospel, but who were *disposed* and *inclined* to embrace it. The main inquiry is, what is the meaning of the word rendered *ordained*? The word is used but eight times in the New Testament. Matt. xxviii. 16, "Into a mountain where Jesus *had appointed* them," i. e. *previously* appointed, or commanded them—before his death. Luke vii. 8, "For I also am a man *set under authority*;" appointed, or designated, as a soldier, to be under the authority of another. Acts xv. 2, "They *determined* that Paul and Barnabas, &c. should go to Jerusalem." Acts xxii. 10, "It shall be told thee of all things which are *appointed* for thee to do." xxviii. 23, "And when they *had appointed* him a day," &c. Rom. xiii. 1, "The powers that be, are *ordained* of God." 1 Cor. xvi. 15, "They *have addicted* themselves to the ministry of saints." The word *τάσσω* or *τίττω* properly means to *place*; to *place in a certain rank or order*. Its meaning is derived from arranging or disposing a body of soldiers in regular order; to arrange in military order. In the places which have been mentioned above, the word is used to denote the following things: (1.) To *command*, or to *designate*. Matt. xxviii. 16. Acts xxii. 10; xxviii. 22. (2.) To *institute*, *constitute*, or *appoint*. Rom. xiii. 1. Comp. 2 Sam. vii. 11. 1 Sam. xxii. 7. (3.) To *determine*, to *take counsel*, to *resolve*. Acts xv. 2. (4.) To *subject* to the authority of another. Luke vii. 8. (5.) To *addict* to; to *devote* to. 1 Cor. xvi. 15. The meaning may be thus expressed: (1.) The word is *never* used to denote an *internal disposition or inclination* arising from one's own self. It does *not* mean that they *disposed themselves* to embrace eternal life. (2.) It has uniformly the notion of an *ordering, disposing, or arranging from without*, i. e. from some other source than the individual himself; as of

the chief men of the city, and ^b raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

51 But they shook ^c off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

b 2Tim.3.11.

c Mar.6.11. Lu.9.5. c.18.6.

a soldier, who is arranged or classified according to the will of the proper officer. In relation to these persons it means, therefore, that they were *disposed* or *inclined* to this from some other source than themselves. (3.) It does not properly refer to an eternal decree, or directly to the doctrine of election; though that may be *inferred* from it; but it refers to their being *THEN IN FACT disposed* to embrace eternal life. They were *then inclined* by an influence from without themselves, or so *disposed* as to embrace eternal life. It refers not to an eternal decree, but that *then* there was such an influence as to dispose them, or incline them, to lay hold on salvation. That this was done by the influence of the Holy Spirit, is clear from all parts of the New Testament. Titus iii. 5, 6. John i. 13. It was not a disposition or arrangement originating with themselves, but with God. (4.) This *implies* the doctrine of election. It was *in fact* that doctrine expressed. It was nothing but God's disposing them to embrace eternal life. And that he does this according to a plan in his own mind—a plan which is unchangeable as God himself is unchangeable—is clear from the Scriptures. Comp. Acts xviii. 10. Rom. viii. 28—30; ix. 15, 16. 21. 23. Eph. i. 4, 5. 11. The meaning may be expressed in few words—who were *THEN disposed, and in good earnest determined, to embrace eternal life, by the operation of the grace of God on their hearts.* ¶ *Eternal life.* Salvation. Note, John iii. 36.

50. *But the Jews stirred up.* Excited opposition. ¶ *Honourable women.* Note, Mark xv. 43. Women of influence, and connected with families of rank. Perhaps they were proselytes, and were connected with the magistrates of the city. ¶ *And raised persecution.* Probably on the ground that they produced disorder and excitement. The aid of "*chief men*" has often been called in to oppose revivals of religion, and to put a period, if possible, to the spread of the gospel. ¶ *Out of their coasts.* Out of the regions of their country; out of their province.

51. *But they shook off the dust, &c.* See Note, Matt. x. 14. ¶ *And came into Ico-*

51 And the disciples were filled with joy, ^a and with the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER XIV.

AND it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude, both of the Jews and also of the Greeks, believed.

2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil-affected against the brethren.

3 Long time therefore abode

^a Matt. 5. 12. 1 Thess. 1. 6.

nium. This was the capital of Lycaonia. It is now called Cogni, or Konieh, and is the capital of Caramania.

52. *And the disciples.* The disciples in Antioch. ¶ *Were filled with joy.* This happened even in the midst of persecution, and is one of the many evidences that the gospel is able to fill the soul with joy even in the severest trials.

CHAPTER XIV.

1. *In Iconium.* Note, ch. xiii. 51. In this place it appears that Timothy became acquainted with Paul and his manner of life. 2 Tim. iii. 10, 11. ¶ *So spake.* Spake with such power—their preaching was attended so much with the influence of the Spirit. ¶ *And of the Greeks.* Probably *proselytes* from the Greeks, who were in the habit of attending the synagogue.

2. *But the unbelieving Jews, &c.* Note, ch. xiii. 50. ¶ *And made their minds evil-affected.* Irritated, or exasperated them. ¶ *Against the brethren.* One of the common appellations by which Christians were known.

3. *Long time therefore.* In this city they were not daunted by persecution. It seems probable that there were here no forcible or public measures to expel them, as there had been at Antioch (ch. xiii. 50), and they therefore regarded it as their duty to remain. God granted them here also great success, which was the main reason for their continuing a long time. Persecution and opposition may be attended often with signal success to the gospel. ¶ *Spake boldly in the Lord.* In the cause of the Lord Jesus; or in his name and authority. Perhaps also the expression includes the idea of their trusting in the Lord. ¶ *Which gave testimony.* Bore witness to the truth of their

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they speaking boldly in the Lord, which ^b gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

4 But the multitude of the city was divided; and ^c part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.

5 And when there was an assault made, both of the Gentiles and also of the Jews, with their rulers, to use *them* despitefully, and to stone them,

6 They were ware of *it*, and fled ^d unto Lystra, and Derbe, cities

^b Mark 16. 20. Heb. 2. 4. ^c c. 28. 24. ^d Matt. 10. 23.

message by working miracles, &c. Comp. Mark xvi. 20. This was evidently the Lord Jesus to whom reference is here made, and it shows that he was still, though bodily absent from them, clothed with power, and still displayed that power in the advancement of his cause. The conversion of sinners accomplished by him is always a *testimony* as decided as it is cheering to the labours and messages of his servants. ¶ *Unto the word of his grace.* His gracious word, or message. ¶ *And granted signs, &c.* Miracles. See Note, Acts ii. 22.

4. *Was divided.* Into parties. Greek, There was a schism, *Εσχίσθη*. ¶ *A part held with the Jews.* Held to the doctrines of the Jews, in opposition to the apostles. A revival of religion may produce excitement by the bad passions of opposers. The enemies of the truth may form parties, and organize opposition. It is no uncommon thing even now for such parties to be formed; but the fault is not in Christianity. It lies with those who form a party *against* religion, and who confederate themselves, as was done here, to oppose it.

5. *An assault made.* Greek, A rush, *ῥεμνῆ*. It denotes an impetuous excitement, and aggression; a *rush* to put them to death. It rather describes a popular tumult than a calm and deliberate purpose. There was a violent, tumultuous excitement. ¶ *Both of the Gentiles, &c.* Of that part of them which was opposed to the apostles. ¶ *To use them despitefully.* Note, Matt. v. 44. *To reproach them; to bring contempt upon them; to injure them.* ¶ *To stone them.* To put them to death by stoning; probably as blasphemers. Acts vii. 57—59.

6. *They were ware of it.* They were

of Lycaonia and unto the region that lieth round about :

7 And there they preached the gospel.

8 And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a^a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked.

9 The same heard Paul speak ; who steadfastly beholding him,

a c.3.2.

and perceiving that he had faith^b to be healed,

10 Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped^c and walked.

11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lift up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The^d gods are come down to us, in the likeness of men.

b Matt.9.28,29.

c Isa.35.56.

d c.28.6.

in some way informed of the excitement and of their danger. ¶ *And fled unto Lystra.* This was a city of Lycaonia, and was a few miles south of Iconium. It is now called *Latik*. ¶ *And Derbe.* Derbe was a short distance east of Lystra. ¶ *Cities of Lycaonia.* Lycaonia was one of the provinces of Asia Minor. It had Galatia north, Pisidia south, Cappadocia east, and Phrygia west. It was formerly within the limits of Phrygia, but was erected into a separate province by Augustus. ¶ *And unto the region, &c.* The adjacent country. Though persecuted, they still preached ; and though driven from one city, they fled into another. This was the direction of the Saviour. Matt. x. 23.

8. *And there sat.* There dwelt. Isa. ix. 1. Acts xviii. 11. *Margin.* The word *sat*, however, indicates his usual posture ; his helpless condition. Such persons commonly sat at the way side, or in some public place to ask for alms. Mark x. 46. ¶ *Impotent in his feet.* ἀδύνατος. Without any power. Entirely deprived of the use of his feet. ¶ *Being a cripple.* Lame. ¶ *Who never had walked.* The miracle therefore would be more remarkable, as the man would be well known, and there could be no plea that there was an imposition. As they were persecuted from place to place, and opposed in every manner, it was desirable that a signal miracle should be performed to carry forward and establish the work of the gospel.

9. *Who steadfastly beholding him.* Fixing his eyes intently on him. Note, Acts i. 10. ¶ *And perceiving.* How he perceived this is not said. Perhaps it was indicated by the ardour, humility, and strong desire depicted in his countenance. He had heard Paul, and perhaps the apostle had dwelt particularly on the miracles with which the gospel had been attested. The miracles wrought also in Iconium had doubtless also been heard of in Lystra. ¶ *Had faith to be*

healed. Comp. Note, Matt. ix. 21, 22, 28, 29. Luke vii. 50 ; xvii. 19 ; xviii. 42.

10. *Said with a loud voice.* Note, John xi. 43. ¶ *And he leaped.* Note, Acts iii. 8. Comp. Isa. xxxv. 6.

11. *They lift up their voices.* They spoke with astonishment ; such as might be expected when it was supposed that the gods had come down. ¶ *In the speech of Lycaonia.* What this language was has much puzzled commentators. It was probably a mixture of the Greek and Syriac. In that region generally the Greek was usually spoken with more or less purity ; and from the fact that it was not far from the regions of Syria, it is probable that the Greek language was corrupted with this foreign admixture. ¶ *The gods, &c.* All the region was idolatrous. The gods which were worshipped there were those which were worshipped throughout Greece. ¶ *Are come down.* The miracle which Paul had wrought led them to suppose this. It was evidently beyond human ability, and they had no other way of accounting for it than by supposing that their gods had personally appeared. ¶ *In the likeness of men.* Many of their gods were heroes, whom they worshipped after they were dead. It was common among them to suppose that the gods appeared to men in human form. The poems of Homer, of Virgil, &c. are filled with accounts of such appearances, and the only way in which they supposed the gods to take knowledge of human affairs, and to aid men, was by their personally appearing in this form. See Homer's *Odyssey*, xvii. 485. Catullus, 64. 384. Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, i. 212. (*Kuinöel*.) Thus Homer says :

For in similitude of strangers oft
The gods who can with ease all shapes assume,
Repair to populous cities, where they mark
Th' outrageous and the righteous deeds of men.

COWPER.

Among the Hindoos, the opinion has

12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

13 Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and ^a would have done sacrifice with the people.

14 *Which*, when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they

^a Dan.2.46. ^b Matt.26.65. ^c c.10.26. James 5.17. Rev.19.10.

been prevalent that there have been many incarnations of their gods.

12. *And they called Barnabas, Jupiter.* Jupiter was represented as the most powerful of all the gods of the ancients. He was represented as the son of Saturn and Ops, and was educated in a cave on mount Ida, in the island of Crete. The worship of Jupiter was almost universal. He was the Ammon of Africa, the Belus of Babylon, the Osiris of Egypt. His common appellation was, the father of gods and men. He was usually represented as sitting upon a golden or an ivory throne, holding in one hand a thunderbolt, and in the other a sceptre of cypress. His power was supposed to extend over other gods; and every thing was subservient to his will, except the fates. There is the most abundant proof that he was worshipped in the region of Lycaonia, and throughout Asia Minor. There was besides a fable among the inhabitants of Lycaonia that Jupiter and Mercury had once visited that place, and had been received by Philemon. The whole fable is related by Ovid. *Metam.* 8. 611, &c. ¶ *And Paul, Mercurius.* Mercury, called by the Greeks *Hermes*, was a celebrated god of antiquity. No less than five of this name are mentioned by Cicero. The most celebrated was the son of Jupiter and Maia. He was the messenger of the gods, and of Jupiter in particular; he was the patron of travellers and shepherds; he conducted the souls of the dead into the infernal regions; and he *presided over orators, and declaimers*, and merchants; and he was also the god of thieves, pickpockets, and all dishonest persons. He was regarded as *the god of eloquence*; and as light, rapid, and quick in his movements. The conjecture of Chrysostom is, that Barnabas was a large, athletic man, and was hence taken for Jupiter; and that Paul was small in his person, and was hence supposed to be Mercury. ¶ *Because he was the chief*

^b rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We ^c also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities ^d unto ^e the living God, which made ^f heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:

^d 1Sam.12.21. 1Ki.16.13. Jer.14.22. Jno.2.8. 1Cor.8.4. ^e 1Thess.1.9. ^f Gen.1.1. Ps.33.6; 146.6. Rev.14.7.

speaker. The office of Mercury was to deliver the messages of the gods; and as Paul only had been discoursing, he was supposed to be Mercury.

13. *Then the priest of Jupiter.* He whose office it was to conduct the worship of Jupiter, by offering sacrifices, &c. ¶ *Which was before their city.* The word "which" here refers not to *the priest*, but to *Jupiter*. The temple or image of Jupiter was in front of their city, or near the gates. Ancient cities were supposed to be under the protection of particular gods; and their *image*, or a temple for their worship, was placed commonly in a conspicuous place at the entrance of the city. ¶ *Brought oxen.* Probably brought two—one to be sacrificed to each. It was common to sacrifice bullocks to Jupiter. ¶ *And garlands.* The victims of sacrifice were usually decorated with ribands and chaplets of flowers. See *Kuinöel*. ¶ *Unto the gates.* The gates of the city where were the images or temple of the gods. ¶ *Would have done sacrifice.* Would have offered sacrifice to Barnabas and Paul. This the priest deemed a part of his office. And here we have a remarkable and most affecting instance of the folly and stupidity of idolatry.

14. *Which, when the apostles.* Barnabas is called an apostle because he was sent forth by the church on a particular message (ch. xiii. 3. Comp. ch. xiv. 26); not because he had been chosen to the peculiar work of the apostleship—to bear witness to the life and resurrection of Christ. See Note, ch. i. 22. ¶ *They rent their clothes.* As an expression of their abhorrence of what they were doing, and of their deep grief that they should thus debase themselves by offering worship to men. See Note, Matt. xxvi. 65.

15. *And saying, Sirs.* Greek, *Men.* ¶ *Why do ye these things?* This is an expression of solemn remonstrance at the folly of their conduct in worshipping those who were men. The abhorrence which

16 Who "in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

17 Nevertheless, ^b he left not

^a Ps. 81.12. c.17.30.

^b Rom. 1.20.

they evinced at this, may throw strong light on the rank and character of the Lord Jesus Christ. When an offer was made to worship Paul and Barnabas, they shrank from it with strong expressions of indignation and abhorrence. Yet when similar worship was offered to the Lord Jesus, when he was addressed by Thomas in the language of worship, "My Lord and my God" (John xx. 28), he commended the disciple. For this act he uttered not the slightest reproof. Nay, he approved it; and expressed his approbation of others who should also do it. ver. 29. Comp. John v. 23. How can this difference be accounted for, except on the supposition that the Lord Jesus was divine? Would he, if a mere man, receive homage as God, when his disciples rejected it with horror? ¶ *Of like passions with you.* We are men like yourselves. We have no claim, no pretensions to any thing more. The word "passions" here means simply that they had the common feelings and propensities of men; we have the nature of men; the affections of men. It does not mean that they were subject to any improper passions, to ill temper, &c. as some have supposed; but that they did not pretend to be gods. 'We need food and drink; we are exposed to pain and sickness, and death.' The Latin Vulgate renders it, 'We are mortal like yourselves.' The expression stands opposed to the proper conception of God, who is not subject to these affections, who is most blessed and immortal. Such a Being only is to be worshipped; and the apostles remonstrated strongly with them on the folly of paying religious homage to beings like themselves. Comp. James v. 17, "Elias [Elijah] was a man subject to like passions as we are," &c. ¶ *That ye should turn from these vanities.* That you should cease to worship idols. Idols are often called vanities, or vain things. Deut. xxxii. 21. 2 Kings xvii. 15. 1 Kings xvi. 13. 26. Jer. ii. 5; viii. 19; x. 8. Jonah ii. 8. They are called *vanities*, and often a *lie*, or lying vanities, as opposed to the living and true God, because they are *unreal*, because they have no power to help, because confidence in them is vain. ¶ *Unto the living God.* 1 Thess. i. 9. He is called the *living God* to distinguish him from idols. See Note, Matt. xvi. 16.

himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain ^c from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

^c Job 5.10. Ps. 147.8. Matt. 5.46.

¶ *Which made heaven, &c.* Who thus showed that he was the only proper object of worship. This doctrine, that there was one God, who had made all things, was new to them. They worshipped multitudes of divinities; and though they regarded Jupiter as the father of gods and men, yet they had no conception that all things had been formed from nothing by the will of one Infinite Being.

16. *Who in times past.* Previous to the gospel; in past ages. ¶ *Suffered all nations.* Permitted all nations; that is, all Gentiles. Acts xvii. 30, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at." ¶ *To walk in their own ways.* To conduct themselves without the restraints and instructions of a written law. They were permitted to follow their own reason and passions, and their own system of religion. He gave them no written laws, and sent to them no messengers. *Why* he did this, we cannot determine. It might have been, among other reasons, to show to the world conclusively, (1.) The insufficiency of reason to guide men in the matters of religion. The experiment was made under the most favourable circumstances. The most enlightened nations, the Greeks and Romans, were left to pursue the inquiry, and failed no less than the most degraded tribes of men. The trial was made for four thousand years, and attended with the same results every where. (2.) It showed the need of revelation to guide man. (3.) It evinced, beyond the possibility of mistake, the depravity of man. In all nations, in all circumstances, men had shown the same alienation from God. By suffering them to walk in their own ways, it was seen that those ways were sin, and that some more than human power was necessary to bring men back to God.

17. *Nevertheless.* Though he gave them no revelation. ¶ *He left not himself without witness.* He gave demonstration of his existence, and of his moral character. ¶ *In that he did good.* By doing good. The manner in which he did it, he immediately specifies. Idols did not do good or confer favours, and were therefore unworthy of their confidence. ¶ *And gave us rain from heaven.* Rain from above, from the clouds. Mark viii. 11. Luke ix. 54; xvii. 29; xxi. 11. John vi. 31, 32

18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

19 And there came thither cer-

tain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and having^a stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

a 2Cor. 11. 25.

Rain is one of the evidences of his goodness. Man could not cause it; and without it, regulated at proper intervals of time, and in proper quantities, the earth would soon be one wide scene of desolation. There is scarcely any thing that more certainly indicates unceasing care and wisdom than the needful and refreshing showers of rain. The sun and stars move by fixed laws, whose operation we can see and anticipate. The falling of rain and dew is regulated by laws which we cannot trace, and *seems* therefore to be poured, as it were, directly from God's hollow hand. Ps. cxlvii. 8, "Who covereth the heaven with clouds; who prepar-eth rain for the earth."

"He sends his show'rs of blessings down,
To cheer the plains below;
He makes the grass the mountains crown,
And corn in valleys grow.

"The cheering wind, the flying cloud,
Obey his mighty word;
With songs and honours sounding loud,
Praise ye the sovereign Lord."—WATTS.

¶ *And fruitful seasons.* Seasons when the earth produces abundance. It is remarkable, and a shining proof of the divine goodness, that so few seasons are unfruitful. The earth yields her increase; and the labours of the husbandman are crowned with success: and the goodness of God demands the expressions of praise. His ancient covenant God does not forget (Gen. viii. 22), though *man* forgets it, and disregards his great Benefactor. ¶ *Filling our hearts with food.* The word *hearts* is here used as a Hebraism, to denote *persons themselves*; filling us with food, &c. Comp. Matt. xii. 40. ¶ *Gladness.* Joy; comfort—the comfort arising from the supply of our constantly returning wants. This is proof of ever watchful goodness. It is demonstration at once that there is a God, and that he is good. It would be easy for God to withdraw these blessings, and leave us to want. A single word, or a single deviation from the fulness of benevolence, would blast all these comforts, and leave us to lamentation, woe, and death. Ps. cxlv. 15, 16.

"The eyes of all wait upon thee,
And thou givest them their food in due sea-
Thou openest thine hand, [son.
And satisfiest the desire of all the living."

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18. *And with these sayings.* With these arguments. ¶ *Scarce restrained they the people.* They were so fully satisfied that the gods had appeared, and were so full of zeal to do them honour.

19. *And there came thither certain Jews.* Not satisfied with having expelled them from Antioch and Iconium, they still pursued them.—Persecutors often exhibit a zeal and perseverance in a bad cause, which it would be well if Christians evinced in a holy cause. Men will often travel farther to do evil than they will to do good; and many men show more zeal in opposing the gospel than professed Christians do in advancing it. ¶ *Antioch and Iconium.* Note, ch. xiii. 14. 51. ¶ *Who persuaded the people.* That they were impostors; and who excited their rage against them. ¶ *And having stoned Paul.* Whom they were just before ready to worship as a god! What a striking instance of the fickleness and instability of idolaters! and what a striking instance of the instability and uselessness of mere popularity. Just before, they were ready to adore him; now, they sought to put him to death. Nothing is more fickle than mere popular favour. The unbounded admiration of a man may soon be changed into unbounded indignation and contempt! It was well for Paul that he was not seeking this popularity, and that he did not depend on it for happiness. He had a good conscience; he was engaged in a good cause; he was under the protection of God; and his happiness was to be sought from a higher source than the applause of men, fluctuating and uncertain as the waves of the sea. To this transaction Paul referred when he enumerated his trials, in 2 Cor. xi. 25, "Once was I stoned." ¶ *Drew him out of the city.* Probably in haste, and in popular rage, as if he was unfit to be in the city, and was unworthy of a decent burial; for it does not appear that they contemplated an interment, but indignantly dragged him beyond the walls of the city to leave him there. Such sufferings and trials it cost to establish that religion in the world which has shed so many blessings on man, and which now crowns us with comfort, and saves us from the abominations and degradations of idolatry

20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

21 And when they had preached

here, and from the pains of hell hereafter. ¶ *Supposing he had been dead.* The next verse shows that he was really not dead, though many commentators, as well as the Jews, have supposed that he was, and was miraculously restored to life. It is remarkable that Barnabas was not exposed to this popular fury. But it is to be remembered that Paul was the chief speaker, and it was his peculiar zeal that exposed him to this tumult.

20. *Howbeit.* But. Notwithstanding the supposition that he was dead. ¶ *As the disciples stood round about him.* It would seem that they did not suppose that he was dead; but might be expecting that he would revive. ¶ *He rose up, &c.* Most commentators have supposed that this was the effect of a miracle. They have maintained that he could not have risen so soon, and entered into the city, without the interposition of miraculous power. (Calvin, Doddridge, Clark, &c.) But the commentators have asserted that which is not intimated by the sacred penman. Nor is there propriety in supposing the intervention of miraculous agency where it is not necessary. The probability is, that he was *stunned* by a blow—perhaps a single blow—and after a short time recovered from it. Nothing is more common than thus by a violent blow on the head to be rendered apparently lifeless, the effect of which soon is over, and the person restored to strength. Pricæus and Wetstein suppose that Paul *feigned* himself to be dead, and when out of danger rose and returned to the city. But this is wholly improbable. ¶ *And came into the city.* It is remarkable that he should have returned again into the same city. But probably it was only among the new converts that he showed himself. The Jews supposed that he was dead; and it does not appear that he again exposed himself to their rage. ¶ *And the next day, &c.* The opposition here was such that it was vain to attempt to preach there any longer. Having been seen by the disciples after his supposed death, their faith was confirmed, and he departed to preach in another place. ¶ *To Derbe.* ver. 6.

21. *Had taught many.* Or rather, had made many disciples (*margin*). ¶ *To*

the gospel to that city, and ¹ had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,

22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to

¹ *Had made many disciples.*

Lystra. ver. 6. ¶ *And to Iconium.* ver. 1. We have here a remarkable instance of the *courage* of the apostles. In these very places they had been persecuted and stoned, and yet in the face of danger they ventured to return. The welfare of the infant churches they deemed of more consequence than their own safety; and they threw themselves again into the midst of danger, to comfort and strengthen those just converted to God. There are times when ministers should not count their own lives dear to them (Acts xx. 24), but when they should fearlessly throw themselves into the midst of danger, confiding only in the protecting care of their God and Saviour.

22. *Confirming. Strengthening.* 'Επιστηρίζοντες. The expression "to confirm" has in some churches a technical signification, denoting "to admit to the full privileges of a Christian, by the imposition of hands." (*Johnson*.) It is scarcely necessary to say that the word here refers to no such rite. It has no reference to any imposition of hands, nor to the thing which is usually supposed to be denoted by the rite of "confirmation." It means simply, that they *established, strengthened, made firm, or encouraged* by the presentation of truth, and by the motives of the gospel. Whether the rite of confirmation, as practised by some churches, be founded on the authority of the New Testament or not, it is certain that it can receive no support from this passage. The truth was, that these were young converts; that they were surrounded by enemies, exposed to temptations, and to dangers; that they had as yet but a slight acquaintance with the truths of the gospel, and that it was therefore important that they should be further instructed in the truth, and established in the faith of the gospel. This was what Paul and Barnabas returned to accomplish. There is not the slightest evidence that they had not been admitted to the full privileges of the church before, or that any *ceremony* was now performed in confirming or strengthening them. ¶ *The souls.* The minds, the hearts; or *the disciples themselves.* ¶ *Disciples.* They were as yet *scholars, or learners,*

continue ^a in the faith, and that ^b we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

23 And when they had ordained

a c.13.43.

b Rom.8.17. 2Tim.3.12.

and the apostles returned to instruct them further in the doctrines of Christ. ¶ *And exhorted them, &c.* ch. xiii. 43. ¶ *In the faith.* In the belief of the gospel. ¶ *And that we must.* καὶ ὅτι δεῖ. That it is fit or proper that we should, &c. Not that it is in itself fixed by any fatal necessity; but that such is the nature of religion, and such the wickedness and opposition of the world, *that it will happen.* We are not to expect that it will be otherwise. We are to calculate on it when we become Christians. *Why* it is proper, or fit, the apostle did not state. But we may remark that it is proper, (1.) Because such is the opposition of the world to pure religion, that it cannot be avoided. Of this they had had striking demonstration in Lystra and Iconium. (2.) It is necessary to reclaim us from wandering, and to keep us in the path of duty. Ps. cxix. 67. 71. (3.) It is necessary to wean us from the world; to keep before one's mind the great truth, that we have here "no continuing city, and no abiding place." Trial here, makes us pant for a world of rest. The opposition of sinners makes us desire that world where "the wicked shall cease from troubling," and where there shall be eternal friendship and peace. (4.) When we are persecuted and afflicted, we may remember that it has been the lot of Christians from the beginning. We tread a path that has been watered by the tears of the saints, and rendered sacred by the shedding of the best blood on the earth. The Saviour trod that path; and it is enough that the "disciple be as his master, and the servant as his lord." Matt. x. 24, 25. ¶ *Through much tribulation.* Through many afflictions. ¶ *Enter into the kingdom of God.* Be saved. Enter into heaven. Note, Matt. iii. 2.

23. *And when they had ordained.* Κατε-
τονίσαντες. The word *ordain* we now use in an ecclesiastical sense, to denote a setting apart to an office by the imposition of hands. But it is evident that the word here is not employed in that sense. That imposition of hands *might* have occurred in setting apart afterwards to this office is certainly possible, but it is not implied in the word employed here, and did not take place in the transaction to which this word refers. The word occurs but

them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

in one other place in the New Testament, 2 Cor. viii. 19, where it is applied to Luke, and translated, "who was also chosen of the church (i. e. appointed or elected by suffrage by the churches), to travel with us," &c. The verb properly denotes *to stretch out the hand*; and as it was customary to elect to office, or to vote, by stretching out or elevating the hand, so the word simply means to elect, appoint, or designate to any office. The word here refers simply to an *election* or *appointment* of the elders. It is said indeed that Paul and Barnabas did this. But probably all that is meant by it is, that they presided in the assembly when the choice was made. It does not mean that they appointed them without consulting the church; but it evidently means that they appointed them in the usual way of appointing officers, by the suffrages of the people. See *Schleusner*, and the notes of *Doddridge* and *Calvin*. ¶ *Ordained them.* Appointed for the *disciples*, or for the church. It is not meant that the elders were ordained for the apostles. ¶ *Elders.* Greek, Presbyters. Literally this word refers to the aged. Note, ch. xi. 30. But it may also be a word relating to office, denoting those who were more experienced than others, to preside over and to instruct the rest. What was the nature of this office, and what was the design of the appointment, is not intimated in this word. All that seems to be implied is, that they were to take the charge of the churches during the absence of the apostles. The apostles were about to leave them. They were just organized into churches; were inexperienced; needed counsel and direction; were exposed to dangers; and it was necessary, therefore, that persons should be designated to watch over the spiritual interests of the brethren. The probability is, that they performed all the functions that were required in the infant and feeble churches; in exhorting, instructing, governing, &c. The more experienced and able would be most likely to be active in exhorting and instructing the brethren; and all would be useful in counselling and guiding the flock. The same thing occurred in the church at Ephesus. See Notes on Acts xx. 17—28. It is not improbable

24 And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.

25 And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia :

26 And thence sailed to Antioch,

that the business of instructing, or teaching, would be gradually confined to the more talented and able of the elders, and that the others would be concerned mainly in governing and directing the general affairs of the church. ¶ *In every church.* It is implied here that there were elders in each church; that is, that in each church there was more than one. See ch. xv. 21, where a similar phraseology occurs, and where it is evident that there was more than one reader of the law of Moses in each city. Titus i. 5, "I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldst . . . ordain elders in every city." Acts xx. 17, "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church." It could not mean, therefore, that they appointed a single minister or pastor to each church, but they committed the whole affairs of the church to a bench of elders. ¶ *And had prayed with fasting.* With the church. They were about to leave them. They had intrusted the interests of the church to a body of men chosen for this purpose; and they now commended the church and its elders together to God. Probably they had no prospect of seeing them again; and they parted as ministers and people should part, and as Christian friends should part, with humble prayer, commending themselves to the protecting care of God. ¶ *They commended them, &c.* They committed the infant church to the guardianship of the Lord. They were feeble, inexperienced, and exposed to dangers; but in his hands they were safe. ¶ *To the Lord, &c.* The Lord Jesus. The connexion shows that he is particularly referred to. In his hands, the redeemed are secure. When we part with Christian friends, we may, with confidence, leave them in his holy care and keeping.

24 *Throughout Pisidia.* Note ch. xiii. 14. ¶ *They came to Pamphylia.* Note, ch. xiii. 13. These places they had visited before.

25. *In Perga.* Note, ch. xiii. 13. ¶ *They went down into Attalia.* This was a city of Pamphylia, situated on the sea-shore. It was built by Attalus Philadelphus, king of Pergamus, who gave it

from whence they had been recommended to ^b the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.

27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church together they rehearsed ^c all that God had done with them, and how he

a c. 13. 1, 3.

b c. 15. 40.

c c. 15. 4.

his own name. It is now called *Antali.* (*Rob. Cal.*)

26. *And thence sailed to Antioch.* Note, ch. xi. 19. ¶ *From whence they had been recommended, &c.* Where they had been appointed to this missionary tour by the church. ch. xiii. 1—4. ¶ *To the grace of God.* His favour and protection had been implored for them in their perilous undertaking. ¶ *For the work which they fulfilled.* This shows conclusively, (1.) That they had accomplished fully the work which was originally contemplated. It was strictly a missionary tour among the Gentiles. It was an important and hazardous enterprise; and was the first in which the church formally engaged. Hence so much importance is attached to it, and so faithful a record of it is preserved. (2.) It shows that the act by which they were set apart to this (Acts xiii. 1—3) was not an ordination to the ministerial office. It was an appointment to a missionary tour. (3.) It shows that the act was not an appointment to the apostleship. Paul was an apostle before by the express appointment of the Saviour; and Barnabas was never an apostle in the original and proper sense of the term. It was a designation to a temporary work, which was now fulfilled.

We may remark, also, in regard to this missionary tour, (1.) That the work of missions is one which early engaged the attention of Christians. (2.) It entered into their plans, and was one in which the church was deeply interested. (3.) The work of missions is attended with danger. Men are now no less hostile to the gospel than they were in Lystra and Iconium. (4.) Missionaries should be sustained by the prayers of the church. And, (5.) In the conduct of Paul and Barnabas, missionaries have an example in founding churches, and in regard to their own trials and persecutions. If Paul and Barnabas were persecuted, missionaries may be now. And if the grace of Christ was sufficient to sustain them, it is not the less sufficient to sustain those of our own times amidst all the dangers attending the preaching of the cross in pagan lands.

27. *They rehearsed, &c.* ch. xi. 4. They

had opened ^a the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

^a 1Cor.16.9. 2Cor.2.12. Rev.3.8.

related what had happened; their dangers and their success. This they did because they had been sent out by the church, and it was proper that they should give an account of their work; and because it furnished a suitable occasion of gratitude to God for his mercy. ¶ *All that God had done, &c.* In protecting, guarding them, &c. All was traced to God. ¶ *Had opened the door of faith.* Had furnished an opportunity of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. 1 Cor. xvi. 9. 2 Cor. ii. 12.

28. *And there they abode.* At Antioch. ¶ *Long time.* How long is not intimated; but we hear no more of them until the council at Jerusalem, mentioned in the next chapter. If the transactions recorded in this chapter occurred, as is supposed, about A. D. 45 or 46, and the council at Jerusalem assembled A. D. 51 or 53, as is supposed, then here is an interval of from five to eight years in which we have no account of them. Where they were, or what was their employment in this interval, the sacred historian has not informed us. It is certain, however, that Paul made several journeys of which we

28 And there they abode long time with the disciples.

have no particular record in the New Testament; and it is possible that some of those journeys occurred during this interval. Thus he preached the gospel as far as Illyricum. Rom. xv. 9. And in 2 Cor. xi. 23—27, there is an account of trials and persecutions, of many of which we have no distinct record, and which might have occurred during this interval. We may be certain that these holy men were not idle. And we may learn from their example to fill up our time with usefulness; to bear all persecutions and trials without a murmur; and to acknowledge the good hand of God in our preservation in our travels; in our defence when we are persecuted; in all the opportunities which may be open before us to do good; and in all the success which may attend our efforts. Christians should remember that it is *God* who opens doors of usefulness; and they should regard it as a matter of thanksgiving that such doors are opened, and that they are permitted to spread the gospel whatever toil it may cost, whatever persecution they may endure, whatever perils they may encounter.









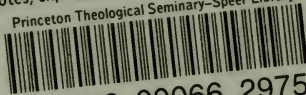
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